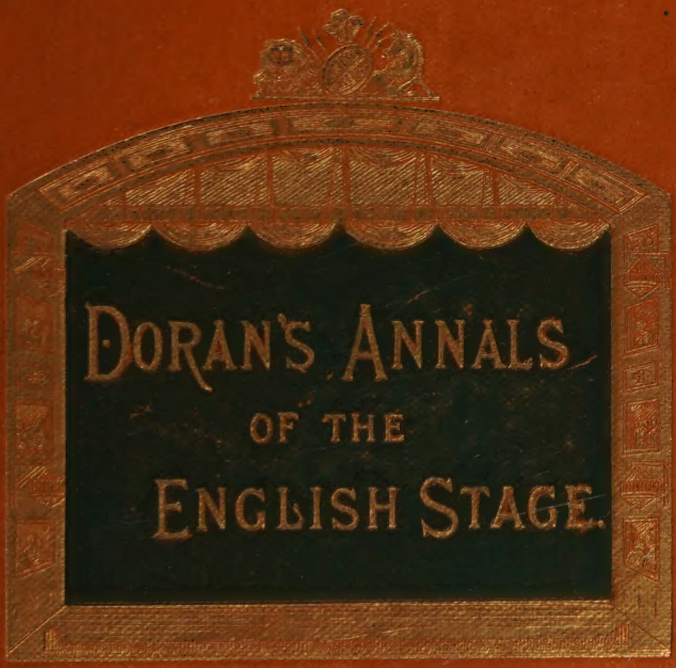
"THEIR MAJESTIES' SERVANTS"



Florence A. James.
1895.

"Their Majesties' Servants"

DR. DORAN, F.S.A.

VOLUME THE FIRST

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1895

"THEIR MAJESTIES' SERVANTS"

ANNALS

OF

THE ENGLISH STAGE

FROM

THOMAS BETTERTON TO EDMUND KEAN

JOHN

BY

DR. DORAN, F.S.A.

EDITED AND REVISED BY ROBERT W. LOWE

With Fifty Copperplate Portraits and Eighty Wood Engravings

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOLUME THE FIRST

LONDON

JOHN C. NIMMO

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PREFACE.

It is unnecessary to apologise for a new edition of Dr. Doran's *Annals of the Stage.* The two editions already published have been for many years out of print, and the first is so rare that copies of it bring a high price whenever they occur for sale. And this demand is not a mere bibliographical accident, for the book has held for many years a recognised position as the standard popular history of the English stage. The admirable work of Genest, indispensable as it is to every writer on theatrical history, and to every serious student of the stage, is in no sense a popular work, and is, indeed, rather a collection of facts towards a history than a history itself.

In preparing this new edition every effort has been made to add to its interest by the introduction of portraits and other illustrations, and to its authority as a book of reference, by correcting those errors which are scarcely to be avoided by

a writer working among the confused, inaccurate, and contradictory documents of theatrical history. No one who has not ventured into this maze can conceive the difficulty of keeping the true path, and I can imagine nothing better calculated to sap one's self-confidence than the task of noting the false turnings made by such a writer as Dr. Doran. I can hardly hope that my own work, light as it is in comparison with his, will be found free from sins of omission, and even of commission.

My principle has been to pass no error, however trifling; but, at the same time, I have not thought myself entitled to discuss matters of opinion, or to criticise, either directly or indirectly, Dr. Doran's treatment of his subject. Thus it would be easy to supplement the information regarding the ancient theatres and the theatre of Shakspeare's time contained in the first and second chapters; but, as Dr. Doran obviously intended that his real work should begin with the Restoration Theatres, I have not interfered with his scheme. I trust that, in this, as in other respects, my work has been done in a spirit free from captiousness.

The illustrations to this edition have been chosen, not from the book "illustrator's" point of view, but with a serious desire to increase its value as a history. In the case of the portraits, those which

Dr. Doran specially mentions, have, wherever it was possible, been selected, and in every instance I believe the portrait given is an accurate and trustworthy likeness. The headpieces, intended to form a supplement to the full-page illustrations, include portraits of persons whose importance scarcely justified their place among the larger pictures, drawings of theatres, and of actors in character. The tailpieces are reproductions of Sayer's beautiful little drawings of Garrick and his contemporaries in their best characters; and in their case no chronological arrangement is possible.

For many valuable notes I am indebted to the kindness of Mr. Alban Doran, who intrusted to me his father's annotated copy of this work. These notes have in every case been acknowledged and marked "*Doran MS.*"

ROBERT W. LOWE.

London, *September* 1887.

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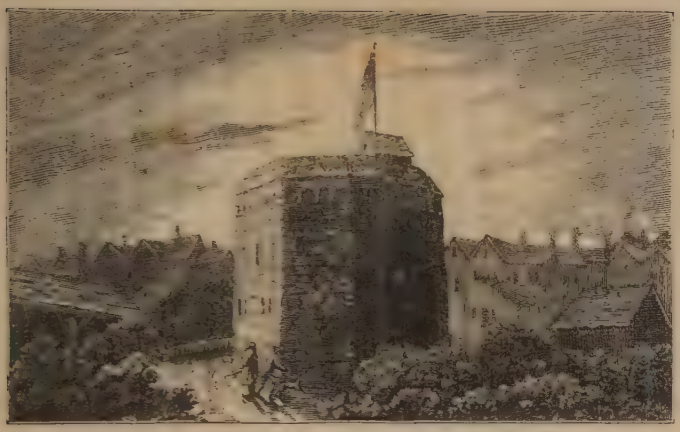


THE BEAR GARDEN.

CHAPTER I.

PROLOGUE.

THE period of the origin of the drama is an unsettled question, but it has been fixed at an early date, if we may accept the theory of a recent writer, who suggests that Moses described the Creation from a visionary pictorial representation, which occupied seven days from the commencement to the close of the spectacle!

Among the most remote of the Chinese traditions, the theatre holds a conspicuous place. In Cochin-China there is at this day a most primitive character about actors, authors, and audience. The governor

of the district enjoys the least rude seat in the sylvan theatre; he directs the applause by tapping with his fingers on a little drum, and as at this signal his secretaries fling strings full of *cash* on to the stage, the performance suffers from continual interruption. For the largesse distributed by the patron of the drama, and such of the spectators as choose to follow his example, the actors and actresses furiously scramble, while the poor poet stands by, sees his best situations sacrificed, and is none the richer—by way of compensation.

In Greece the profession of actor was accounted honourable. In Rome it was sometimes a well-requited, but also a despised vocation. During the decade of years when that aristocratic democrat Pisistratus held power, the drama first appeared (it is said) at Athens. It formed a portion of the religion of the State. The theatre was a temple in which, rudely enough at first, the audience were taught how the will, not only of men but of gods, must necessarily submit to the irresistible force of Destiny. This last power, represented by a combination of the lyric and epic elements, formed the drama which had its origin in Greece alone. In such a sense the Semitic races had no drama at all, while in Greece it was almost exclusively of Attic growth, its religious character being especially supported on behalf of the audience by the ever-sagacious, morally, and fervently-pious chorus. Lyric tragedy existed before the age of Thespis and Pisistratus; but a spoken tragedy dates from that period alone, above

five centuries earlier than the Christian era; and the new theatre found at once its Prynne and its Collier in that hearty hater of actors and acting, the legislative Solon.

At the great festivals, when the theatres were opened, the expenses of the representations were borne partly by the State and partly by certain wealthy officials. The admission was free, until over-crowding produced fatal accidents. To diminish the latter an entrance-fee of two *oboli*, $3\frac{1}{4}$d., was established, but the receipts were made over to the poor.[1] From morning till dewy eve these roofless buildings, capable of containing on an average twenty thousand persons, were filled from the ground to the topmost seat, in the sweet spring-tide, sole theatrical season of the Greeks.

Disgrace and disfranchisement were the penalties laid upon the professional Roman actor. He was accounted infamous, and was excluded from the tribes. Nevertheless, the calling in Italy had something of a religious quality. Livy tells us of a company of Etruscan actors, ballet-pantomimists, however, rather than comedians, who were employed to avert the anger of the gods, which was manifested by a raging pestilence. These Etruscans were in their way the originators of the drama in Italy. That drama was at first a dance, then a dance and song; with them was subsequently interwoven a story. From the period of Livius Andronicus (B.C. 240) is dated the

[1] Professor Ward says: "The entrance-money was from the time of Pericles provided out of the public treasury."

origin of an actual Latin theatre, a theatre the glory of which was at its highest in the days of Attius and Terence, but for which a dramatic literature became extinct when the mimes took the place of the old comedy and tragedy.

Even in Rome the skill of the artist sometimes freed him from the degradation attached to the exercise of his art. Roscius, the popular comedian, contemporary with Cicero, was elevated by Sulla to the equestrian dignity, and with Æsopus, the great tragedian, enjoyed the friendship of Tully and of Tully's friends, the wisest and the noblest in Rome. Roscius and Æsopus were what would now be called scholars and gentlemen, as well as unequalled artists, whom no amount of application could appal when they had to achieve a triumph in their art. An Austrian emperor once "encored" an entire opera (the *Matrimonio Segreto*); but, according to Cicero, his friend Æsopus so delighted his enthusiastic audience, that in one piece they encored him "millies," a thousand, or perhaps an indefinite number of times. The Roman tragedian lived well, and bequeathed a vast fortune to his son. Roscius earned £32 daily, and he too amassed great wealth.

The mimes were satirical burlesques, parts of which were often improvised, and had some affinity to the pasquinades and harlequinades of modern Italy. The writers were the intimate friends of emperors; the actors were infamous. Cæsar induced Decius Laberius, an author of knightly rank, to appear on the stage in one of these pieces; and Laberius obeyed,

not for the sake of the *honorarium*, £4000, but from dread of disobeying an order from so powerful a master. The unwilling actor profited by his degradation to satirise the policy of Cæsar, who did not resent the liberty, but restored Laberius to the rank and equestrian privileges which he had forfeited by appearing on the stage. Laberius, however, never recovered the respect of his countrymen, not even of those who had applauded him the most loudly.

The licentious pantomimists were so gross in their performances that they even disgusted Tiberius, who forbade them from holding any intercourse, as the professional *histriones* or actors of the drama had done, with Romans of equestrian or senatorial dignity. It was against the stage, exclusively given up to their scandalous exhibitions, that the Christian fathers levelled their denunciations. They would have approved a "well-trod stage," as Milton did, and the object attributed to it by Aristotle,—but they had only anathemas for that horrible theatre where danced and postured Bathyllus and Hylas, and Pylades, Latinus and Nero, and even that graceful Paris, whom Domitian slew in his jealousy, and of whom Martial wrote that he was the great glory and grief of the Roman theatre, and that all Venuses and Cupids were buried for ever in the sepulchre of Paris, the darling of old Rome.

In this our England, minds and hearts had ever been open to dramatic impressions. The Druidical rites contained the elements of dramatic spectacle. The Pagan Saxon era had its dialogue-actors, or

buffoons; and when the period of Christianity succeeded, its professors and teachers took of the evil epoch what best suited their purposes. In narrative dialogue, or song, they dramatised the incidents of the lives of the saints, and of One greater than saints; and they thus rendered intelligible to listeners what would have been incomprehensible if it had been presented to them as readers.

In Castle-Hall, before farm-house fires, on the bridges, and in the market-places, the men who best performed the united offices of missionary and actor, were, at once, the most popular preachers and players of the day. The greatest of them all, St. Adhelm, when he found his audience growing weary of too much serious exposition, would take his small harp from under his robes, and would strike up a narrative song, that would render his hearers hilarious.

The mixture of the sacred and profane in the early dialogues and drama prevailed for a lengthened period. The profane sometimes superabounded, and the higher Church authorities had to look to it. The monotony of monastic life had caused the wandering glee-men to be too warmly welcomed within the monastery circles, where there were men who cheerfully employed their energies in furnishing new songs and lively "patter" to the strollers. It was, doubtless, all well meant; but more serious men thought it wise to prohibit the indulgence of this peculiar literary pursuit. Accordingly, the Council of Clovershoe, and decrees bearing the king's mark, severally ordained that actors, and other vagabonds therein named,

should no longer have access to monasteries, and that no priest should either play the glee-man himself, or encourage the members of that disreputable profession, by turning ale poets, and writing songs for them.

It is a singular fact, that one of our earliest theatres had Geoffrey, a monk, for its manager, and Dunstable—immortalised by Silvester Daggerwood —for a locality. This early manager, who flourished about 1119,[1] rented a house in the town just named, when a drama was represented, which had St. Katherine for a heroine, and her whole life for a subject. This proto-theatre was, of course, burnt down; and the managing monk withdrew from the profession, more happy than most ruined managers, in this, that he had his cell at St. Albans, to which he could retire, and therein find a home for the remainder of his days.

Through a course of Mysteries, Miracle-plays—illustrating Scripture, history, legend, and the sufferings of the martyrs,—Moralities, in which the vices were in antagonism against the virtues, and Chronicle-plays, which were history in dialogue, we finally arrive at legitimate Tragedy and Comedy. Till this last and welcome consummation, the Church as regularly employed the stage for religious ends, as the old heathen magistrates did when they made village festivals the means of maintaining a religious feeling among the villagers. Professor Browne, in his *His-*

[1] Geoffrey was made Abbot of St. Albans in 1119. The play, of course, was many years earlier.

tory of Greek Classical Literature, remarks :—"The believers in a pure faith can scarcely understand a religious element in dramatic exhibitions. They who knew that God is a spirit, and that they who worship Him must worship him in spirit and in truth, feel that His attributes are too awful to permit any ideas connected with Deity to be brought into contact with the exhibition of human passions. Religious poetry of any kind, except that which has been inspired, has seldom been the work of minds sufficiently heavenly and spiritual, to be perfectly successful in attaining the end of poetry, namely the elevation of the thoughts to a level with the subject. It brings God down to man, instead of raising man to Him. It causes that which is most offensive to religious feeling, and even good taste, irreverent familiarity with subjects which cannot be contemplated without awe. But a religious drama would be, to those who realise to their own minds the spirituality of God, nothing less than anthropomorphism and idolatry. Christians of a less advanced age, and believers in a more sensuous creed, were able to view with pleasure the mystery-plays in which the gravest truths of the Gospel were dramatically represented; nay, more, just as the ancient Athenians could look even upon their gross and licentious comedy as forming part of a religious ceremony, so could Christians imagine a religious element in profane dramas which represented in a ludicrous light subjects of the most holy character."

Mysteries kept the stage from the Norman to the

Tudor era. The Moralities began to displace them during the reign of Henry VI., who was a less beneficial patron of the stage than that Richard III. who has himself retained a so unpleasant possession of the scene. Actors and dramatists have been ungrateful to this individual, who was their first practically useful patron. Never, previous to Richard's time, had an English prince been known to have a company of players of his own. When Duke of Gloucester, a troop of such servants was attached to his household. Richard was unselfish towards these new retainers; whenever he was too "busy," or "not i' the vein" to receive instruction or amusement at their hands, he gave them licence to travel abroad, and forth went the mirthful company, from county to county, mansion to mansion, from one corporation-hall and from one inn-yard to another, playing securely under the sanction of his name, winning favour for themselves, and a great measure of public regard, probably, for their then generous and princely master.

The fashion thus set by a prince was followed by the nobility, and it led to a legal recognition of the actor and his craft, in the royal licence of 1572, whereby the players connected with noble houses were empowered to play wherever it seemed good to them, if their master sanctioned their absence, without any let or hindrance from the law.

The patronage of actors by the Duke of Gloucester led to a love of acting by gentlemen amateurs. Richard had ennobled the profession, the gentlemen

of the Inns of Court took it up, and they soon had kings and queens leading the applause of approving audiences. To the same example may be traced the custom of having dramatic performances in public schools, the pupils being the performers. These boys, or, in their place, the children of the Chapel Royal, were frequently summoned to play in presence of the King and Court. Boatsful of them went down the river to Greenwich, or up to Hampton Court, to enliven the dulness or stimulate the religious enthusiasm of their royal auditors there. At the former place, and when there was not yet any suspicion of the orthodoxy of Henry VIII., the boys of St. Paul's acted a Latin play before the sovereign and the representatives of other sovereigns. The object of the play was to exalt the Pope, and consequently Luther and his wife were the foolish villains of the piece, exposed to the contempt and derision of the delighted and right-thinking hearers.

In most cases the playwrights, even when members of the clergy, were actors as well as authors. This is the more singular, as the players were generally of a roystering character, and were but ill-regarded by the Church. Nevertheless, by their united efforts, though they were not always colleagues, they helped the rude production of the first regularly constructed English comedy, "Ralph Roister Doister," about 1540. The author was a "clerk," named Nicholas Udall, whom Eton boys, whose master he was, hated because of his harshness. The rough and reverend gentleman brought forth the above piece, just one

year previous to his losing the mastership, on suspicion of being concerned in a robbery of the college plate.

Subsequently to this, the Cambridge youths had the courage to play a tragedy called "Pammachus," which must have been offensive to the government of Henry VIII. Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester, Chancellor of the University, immediately wrote a characteristic letter to the Vice-Chancellor, Dr. Matthew Parker. It is dated 27th March 1545. "I have been informed," he says, "that the youth in Christ's College, contrary to the mind of the Master and President, hath of late played a tragedy called 'Pammachus,' a part of which tragedy is so pestiferous as were intolerable. If it be so, I intend to travail, as my duty is, for the reformation of it. I know mine office there, and mind to do in it as much as I may." Parker answers on the 3d of April, that the play had been performed with the concurrence of the College authorities, after means had been taken to strike out "slanderous cavillations and suspicious sentences," and "all such matter whereby offence might greatly have risen. Hitherto," adds Parker, "have I not seen any man that was present at it to show himself grieved; albeit it was thought their time and labour might be spent in a better-handled matter." Gardiner is not satisfied with this, and he will have the subject investigated. Accordingly, some of the audience are ordered to be examined to discover if what they applauded was what the King's government had reproved. "I have heard specialities," he writes, "that they" (the actors) "reproved Lent fastings, all ceremonies, and albeit

the words of sacrament and mass were not named, yet the rest of the matter written in that tragedy, in the reproof of them was expressed." Gardiner intimates that if the authorities concurred, after exercising a certain censorship, in licensing the representation, they were responsible for all that was uttered, as it must have had the approval of their judgments.

A strict examination followed. Nearly the entire audience passed under it, but not a man could or would remember that he had heard anything to which he could make objection. Therewith Parker transmitted to Gardiner the stage-copy of the tragedy, which the irate prelate thus reviews :—"Perusing the book of the tragedy which ye sent me, I find much matter not stricken out, all which, by the parties' own confession, was uttered very naught, and on the other part something not well omitted." Flagrant lies are said to be mixed up with incontrovertible truths ; and it is suggested, that if any of the audience had declared that they had heard nothing at which they could take offence, it must have been because they had forgotten much of what they had heard. Ultimately, Parker was left to deal with the parties as he thought best ; and he wisely seems to have thought it best to do nothing. Plays were the favourite recreation of the university men ; albeit, as Parker writes, "Two or three in Trinity College think it very unseeming that Christians should play or be present at any profane comedies or tragedies."

Actors and clergy came into direct collision, when, at the accession of Edward VI. (1547), the Bishop of Winchester announced "a solemn dirge *and mass*," in honour of the lately deceased king, Henry VIII. The indiscreet Southwark actors thereupon gave notice that at the time announced for the religious service they would act a "solempne play" to try, as the bishop remarks in a letter to Paget, "who shall have most resort, they in game or I in earnest." The prelate urgently requests the interference of the Lord Protector, but with what effect, the records in the State Paper Office afford no information.

Some of these Southwark actors were the "servants" of Henry Grey, Marquis of Dorset, whose mansion was on the opposite side of the river. In 1551 he was promoted to the dukedom of Suffolk, but his poor players were then prohibited from playing anywhere, save in their master's presence.[1]

Severity led to fraud. In the autumn of the following year Richard Ogle forwarded to the Council a forged licence, taken from the players—a matter which was pronounced to be "worthy of correction." The young king's patronage of his own "servants" was not marked by a princely liberality; the salary of one of his players of interludes, John Brown, was five marks yearly as wages, and one pound three shillings and fourpence for his livery.

Of the party dramatists of this reign, that reverend

[1] It would appear that noblemen's players were prohibited from acting, even before their masters, without leave from the Privy Council.

prelate, "Bilious Bale," was the most active and the least pleasant-tempered. Bale had been a Romanist priest, he was now a Protestant bishop (of Ossory), with a wife to control the episcopal hospitality. Bale had "seen the world." He had gone through marvellous adventures, of which his adversaries did not believe a word; and he had converted the most abstruse doctrinal subjects into edifying semi-lively comedies. The bishop did not value his enemies at the worth of a rush in an old king's chamber. He was altogether a Boanerges; and when his "John, King of England," was produced, the audience, comprising two factions in the Church and State, found the policy of Rome towards this country illustrated with such effect, that while one party hotly denounced, the other applauded the coarse and vigorous audacity of the author.

So powerful were the influences of the stage, when thus applied, that the government of Queen Mary made similar application of them in support of their own views. A play, styled "Respublica," exhibited to the people the alleged iniquity of the Reformation, pointed out the dread excellence of the sovereign herself (personified as Queen Nemesis), and exemplified her inestimable qualities, by making all the Virtues follow in her train as Maids of honour.

Such, now, were the orthodox actors; but the heretical players were to be provided against by stringent measures. A decree of the sovereign and council, in 1556, prohibited all players and pipers from strolling through the kingdom; such strollers—the pipers sin-

gularly included—being, as it was said, disseminators of seditions and heresies.

The eye of the observant government also watched the resident actors in town. King Edward had ordered the removal of the king's revels and masques from Warwick Inn, Holborn, "to the late dissolved house of Blackfriars, London," where considerable outlay was made for scenery and machinery—adjuncts to stage effect—which are erroneously supposed to have been first introduced a century later by Davenant. There still remained acting a company at the Boar's Head, without Aldgate, on whom the police of Mary were ordered to make levy. The actors had been playing in that inn-yard a comedy, entitled a "Sack full of News." The order of the privy council to the mayor informs his worship, that it is "a lewd play;" bids him send his officers to the theatre without delay, and not only to apprehend the comedians, but to "take their play-book from them and send it before the privy council."

The actors were under arrest for four-and-twenty hours, and were then set free, but under certain stipulations to be observed by them "and all other players throughout the city,"—namely: they were to exercise their vocation of acting "between All Saints and Shrovetide" only; and they were bound to act no other plays but such as were approved of by the Ordinary. This was the most stringent censorship to which the stage has ever been subjected.

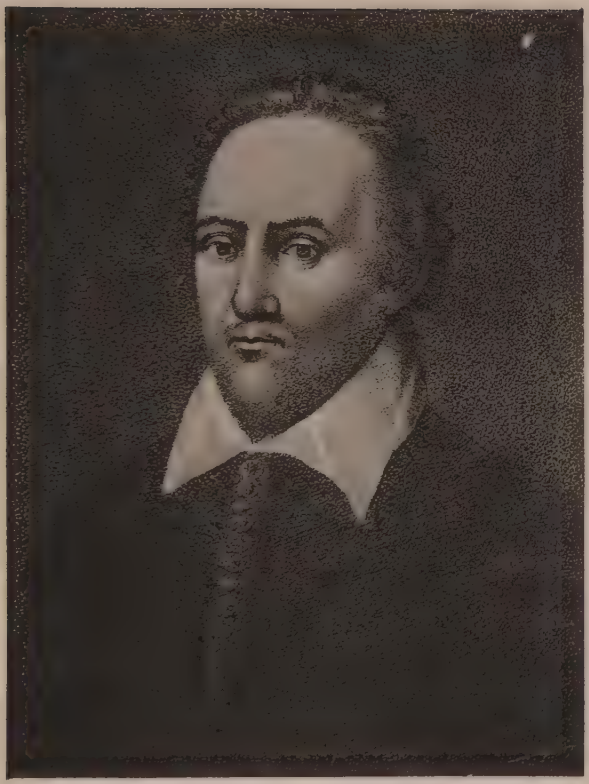
Although Edward had commanded the transfer of the company of actors from Warwick Inn to Black-

friars, that dissolved monastery was not legally converted into a theatre till the year 1576, when Elizabeth was on the throne. In that year[1] the Earl of Leicester's servants were licensed to open their series of seasons in a house, the site of which is occupied by Apothecaries' Hall and some adjacent buildings. At the head of the company was James, father of Richard Burbage, the original representative of Richard III. and of Hamlet, the author of which tragedies, so named, was, at the time of the opening of the Blackfriars' theatre, a lad of twelve years of age, surmounting the elementary difficulties of Latin and Greek in the Free School of Stratford-on-Avon.

In Elizabeth the drama possessed a generous patroness and a vindictive censor. Her afternoons at Windsor Castle and Richmond were made pleasant to her by the exertions of her players. The cost to her of occasional performances at the above residences during two years amounted to a fraction over £444. There were incidental expenses also, proving that the actors were well cared for. In the year 1575, among the estimates for plays at Hampton Court, the liberal sum of £8, 14s. is set down "for the boyling of the brawns against Xtmas."

As at Court, so also did the drama flourish at the Universities, especially at Cambridge. There, in 1566, the coarse dialect comedy, "Gammer Gurton's Needle"—a marvellous production, when considered

[1] The patent was dated 1574, and does not specify any particular building or locality.



as the work of a bishop, Still, of Bath and Wells—was represented amid a world of laughter.

There, too, was exercised a sharp censorship over both actors and audience. In a letter from Vice-Chancellor Hatcher to Burleigh, the conduct of Punter, a student of St. John's, at stage-plays at Caius and Trinity, is complained of as unsteady. In 1581 the heads of houses again make application to Burleigh, objecting to the players of the Great Chamberlain, the Earl of Oxford, poet and courtier, exhibiting certain plays already "practised" by them before the King. The authorities, when scholastic audiences were noisy, or when players brought no novelty with them to Cambridge, applied to the great statesman in town, and vexed him with dramatic troubles, as if he had been general stage-manager of all the companies strolling over the kingdom.

On one occasion the stage was employed as a vantage ground whereon to raise a battery against the power of the stage's great patroness, the Queen. In 1599, the indiscreet followers of Essex "filled the pit of the theatre, where Rutland and Southampton are daily seen, and where Shakspeare's company, in the great play of 'Richard II.,' have, for more than a year, been feeding the public eye with pictures of the deposition of kings." In June of the following year, "those scenes of Shakspeare's play disturb Elizabeth's dreams. The play had had a long and splendid run, not less from its glorious agony of dramatic passion than from the open countenance lent to it by the Earl, who, before his voyage, was a

constant auditor at the Globe, and by his constant companions, Rutland and Southampton. The great parliamentary scene, the deposition of Richard, not in the printed book, was possibly not in the early play; yet the representation of a royal murder and a successful usurpation on the public stage is an event to be applied by the groundlings, in a pernicious and disloyal sense. Tongues whisper to the Queen that this play is part of a great plot to teach her subjects how to murder kings. They tell her she is Richard; Essex, Bolingbroke. These warnings sink into her mind. When Lambard, Keeper of the Records, waits upon her at the palace, she exclaims to him, 'I am Richard! Know you not that?'"

The performance of this play was, nevertheless, not prohibited. When the final attempt of Essex was about to be made, in February 1601—"To fan the courage of their crew," says Mr. Hepworth Dixon, from whose *Personal History of Lord Bacon* I borrow these details, "and prepare the citizens for news of a royal deposition, the chiefs of the insurrection think good to revive, for a night, their favourite play. They send for Augustine Phillips, manager of the Blackfriars Theatre, to Essex House; Monteagle, Percy, and two or three more—among them Cuffe and Meyrick—gentlemen whose names and faces he does not recognise, receive him; and Lord Monteagle, speaking for the rest, tells him that they want to have played the next day Shakspeare's deposition of Richard II. Phillips objects that the play is stale, that a new one is running, and that the company

will lose money by a change. Monteagle meets his objections. The theatre shall not lose; a host of gentlemen from Essex House will fill the galleries; if there is fear of loss, here are 40s. to make it up. Phillips takes the money, and King Richard is duly deposed for them, and put to death."

Meanwhile, the profession of player had been assailed by fierce opponents. In 1587,[1] when twenty-three summers lightly sat on Shakspeare's brow, Gosson, the "parson" of St. Botolph's, discharged the first shot against stage plays which had yet been fired by any one not in absolute authority. Gosson's book was entitled, *A School of Abuse*, and it professed to contain "a pleasant invective against poets, players, jesters, and such like caterpillars of a Commonwealth." Gosson's pleasantry consists in his illogical employment of invective. Domitian favoured plays, *argal*, Domitian's domestic felicity was troubled by a player—Paris. Of Caligula, Gosson remarks, that he made so much of players and dancers, that "he suffered them openly to kiss his lips, when the senators might scarcely have a lick at his feet;" and the good man of St. Botolph's adds, that the murder of Domitian, by Charea, was "a fit catastrophe," for it was done as the Emperor was returning from a play!

As a painter of manners, Gosson thus gaily limns the audiences of his time. "In our Assemblies at plays in London, you shall see such heaving and shouting, such pitching and shouldering to sit by

[1] 1579 (2d edition).

women, such care for their garments that they be not trodden on, such eyes to their laps that no chips light on them, such pillows to their backs that they take no hurt, such masking in their ears, I know not what; such giving them pippins to pass the time; such playing at foot-saunt without cards; such ticking, such toying, such smiling, such winking, and such manning them home when the sports are ended, that it is a right comedy to mark their behaviour." In this picture Gosson paints a good-humoured and a gallant people. When he turns from failings to vices, the old rector of St. Botolph's dwells upon them as Tartuffe does upon the undraped shoulders of Dorinne. He likes the subject, and makes attractive what he denounces as pernicious. The playwrights he assails with the virulence of an author, who, having been unsuccessful himself, has no gladness in the success, nor any generosity for the shortcomings of others. Yet he cannot deny that some plays are moral, such as "Cataline's Conspiracy,"—"because," as he elegantly observes, "it is said to be a pig of mine own sow." This, and one or two other plays written by him, he complaisantly designates as "good plays, and sweet plays, and of all plays the best plays, and most to be liked."

Let us now return to the year of Shakspeare's birth. The great poet came into the world when the English portion of it was deafened with the thunder of Archbishop Grindal, who flung his bolts against the profession which the child in his cradle at Stratford was about to ennoble for ever. England

had been devastated by the plague of 1563. Grindal illogically traced the rise of the pestilence to the theatres; and to check the evil he counselled Cecil to suppress the vocation of the idle, infamous, youth-infecting players, as the prelate called them, for one whole year, and—"if it were for ever," adds the primate, "it were not amiss."

Elizabeth's face shone upon the actors, and rehearsals went actively on before the Master of the Revels. The numbers of the players, however, so increased and spread over the kingdom, that the government, when Shakspeare was eight years of age, enacted that startling statute which is supposed to have branded dramatic art and artists with infamy. But the celebrated statute of 1572 does *not* declare players to be "rogues and vagabonds." It simply threatens to treat as such all acting companies who presume to set up their stage *without* the license of "two justices of the peace at least." This was rather to protect the art than to insult the artist; and a few years subsequent to the publication of this statute, Elizabeth granted the first *royal* patent conceded in England to actors—that of 1576.[1] By this authority Lord Leicester's servants were empowered to produce such plays as seemed good to them, "as well," says the Queen, "for the recreation of our loving subjects as *for our solace and pleasure*, when we shall think good to see them." Sovereign could scarcely pay a more graceful compliment to poet or to actor.

This royal patent sanctioned the acting of plays

[1] Should be 1574. It is dated 7th May 1574.

within the liberties of the city; but against this the city magistrates commenced an active agitation. Their brethren of Middlesex followed a like course throughout the county. The players were treated as the devil's missionaries; and such unsavoury terms were flung at them and at playwrights, by the city aldermen and the county justices, that thereon was founded that animosity which led dramatic authors to represent citizens and justices as the most egregious of fools, the most arrant of knaves, and the most deluded of husbands.

Driven from the city, Burbage and his gay brotherhood were safe in the shelter of Blackfriars, adjacent to the city walls. Safe, but neither welcome nor unmolested. The devout and noble ladies who had long resided near the once sacred building, clamoured at the audacity of the actors. Divine worship and sermon, so they averred, would be grievously disturbed by the music and rant of the comedians, and by the debauched companions resorting to witness those abominable plays and interludes.

This cry was shrill and incessant, but it was unsuccessful. The Blackfriars' was patronised by a public whose favours were also solicited by those "sumptuous houses" the "Theatre" and the "Curtain" in Shoreditch. Pulpit logicians reasoned, more heedless of connection between premises and conclusion than Grindal or Gosson. "The cause of plagues is sin," argues one, "and the cause of sin are plays; therefore, the cause of plagues are plays." Again: "If these be not suppressed," exclaims a

Paul's Cross preacher, "it will make such a tragedy that all London may well mourn while it is London."[1] But for the sympathy of the Earl of Leicester it would have gone ill with these players. He has been as ill-requited by authors and actors as their earlier friend, Richard of Gloucester. To this day the stage exhibits the great earl, according to the legend contrived by his foes, as the murderer of his wife.

Sanctioned by the court, befriended by the noble, and followed by the general public, the players stood their ground, but they lacked the discretion which should have distinguished them. They bearded authority, played in despite of legal prohibitions, and introduced forbidden subjects of state and religion upon their stage. Thence ensued suspensions for indefinite periods, severe supervision when the suspension was rescinded, and renewed transgression on the part of the reckless companies, even to the playing on a Sunday, in any locality where they conjectured there was small likelihood of their being followed by a warrant.

But the most costly of the theatrical revels of King James took place at Whitehall, at Greenwich, or at Hampton Court, on Sunday evenings—an unseemly practice, which embittered the hatred of the Puritans against the stage, all belonging to it, and all who patronised it. James was wiser when he licensed Kirkham, Hawkins, Kendall, and Payne to train the Queen's children of the revels, and to exercise them

[1] These quotations are both from the same sermon.

in playing within the Blackfriars' or elsewhere all plays which had the sanction of old Samuel Danyell. His queen, Anne, was both actress and manager in the masques performed at court, the expenses of which often exceeded, indeed were ordered not to be limited to, £1000. "Excellent comedies" were played before Prince Charles and the Prince Palsgrave[1] at Cambridge; and the members of St. John's, Clare, and Trinity, acted before the King and court in 1615, when the illustrious guests were scattered among the colleges, and twenty-six tuns of wine consumed within five days!

The lawyers alone were offended at the visits of the court to the amateurs at Cambridge, especially when James went thither to see the comedy of *Ignoramus*, in which law and lawyers are treated with small measure of respect. When James was prevented from going to Cambridge, he was accustomed to send for the whole scholastic company to appear before him, in one of the choicest of their pieces, at Royston. Roving troops were licensed by this play-loving king to follow their vocation in stated places in the country, under certain restrictions for their tarrying and wending—a fortnight's residence in one town being the time limited, with injunction not to play "during church hours."

Then there were unlicensed satirical plays in unlicensed houses. Sir John Yorke, his wife and brothers, were fined and imprisoned, because of a scandalous play acted in Sir John's house, in favour

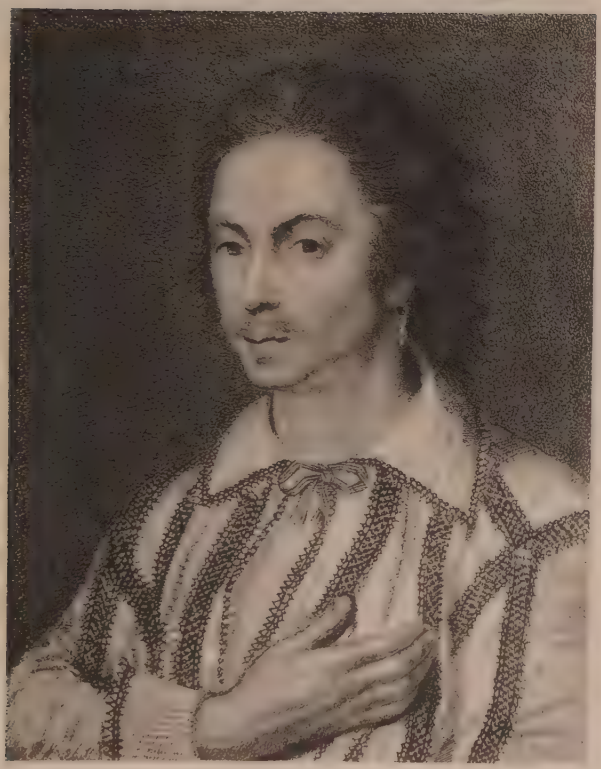
[1] Or, Prince Palatine.

of Popery. On another occasion, in 1617, we hear of a play, in some country mansion, in which the King, represented as a huntsman, observed that he had rather hear a dog bark than a cannon roar. Two kinsmen, named Napleton, discussed this matter, whereupon one of them remarked that it was a pity the King, so well represented, ever came to the crown of England at all, for he loved his dogs better than his subjects. Whereupon the listener to this remark went and laid information before the council against the kinsman who had uttered it!

The players could, in James's reign, boast that their profession was at least kindly looked upon by the foremost man in the English Church. "No man," says Hacket, "was more wise or more serious than Archbishop Bancroft, the Atlas of our clergy, in his time; and he that writes this hath seen an interlude well presented before him, at Lambeth, by his own gentlemen, when I was one of the youngest spectators." The actors thus had the sanction of the Archbishop of Canterbury in James's reign, as they had that of Williams, Archbishop of York, in the next. Hacket often alludes to theatrical matters. "The theatres," he says, in one of his discourses made during the reign of Charles II., when the preacher was Bishop of Lichfield and Coventry, "are not large enough nowadays to receive our loose gallants, male and female, but whole fields and parks are thronged with their concourse, where they make a muster of their gay clothes." Meanwhile, in 1616, the pulpit once more issued anathemas against the

stage. The denouncer, on this occasion, was the preacher of St. Mary Overy's, named Sutton, whose undiscriminating censure was boldly, if not logically, answered by the actor, Field. There is a letter from the latter in the State Paper Office, in which he remonstrates against the sweeping condemnation of all players. The comedian admits that what he calls his trade has its corruptions, like other trades; but he adds, that since it is patronised by the King, there is disloyalty in preaching against it, and he hints that the theology of the preacher must be a little out of gear, seeing that he openly denounces a vocation which is not condemned in Scripture!

Field, the champion of his craft in the early part of the seventeenth century, was one of the dozen actors to whom King James, in 1619, granted a licence to act comedy, tragedy, history, &c., for the solace and pleasure of his Majesty and his subjects, at the Globe, and at their private house in the precincts of Blackfriars. This licence was made out to Hemings, Burbage, Condell, Lowen, Tooley, Underwood, Field, Benfield, Gough, Eccleston, Robinson, Shancks, and their associates. Their success rendered them audacious, and, in 1624, they got into trouble, on a complaint of the Spanish ambassador. The actors at the Globe had produced Middleton's "Game at Chess," in which the action is carried on by black and white pieces, representing the Reformed and Romanist parties. The latter, being the rogues of the piece, are foiled, and are "put in the bag." The Spanish envoy's complaint was founded on



the fact that living persons were represented by the actors, such persons being the King of Spain, Gondomar, and the famous Antonio de Dominis, who, after being a Romish bishop (of Spalato), professed Protestantism, became Dean of Windsor, and after all died in his earlier faith, at Rome. On the ambassador's complaint, the actors and the author were summoned before the council, but no immediate result followed, for, two days later, Nethercole writes to Carleton, informing him that "the comedy in which the whole Spanish business is taken up, is drawing £100 nightly." At that time, a house with £20 in it was accounted a "good house," at either the Globe or Blackfriars. Receipts amounting to five times that sum, for nine afternoons successively, may be accepted as a proof of the popularity of this play. The Spaniard, however, would not let the matter rest; the play was suppressed, the actors forbidden to represent living personages on the stage, and the author was sent to prison. Middleton was not long detained in durance vile. James set him free, instigated by a quip in a poor epigram,—

> "Use but your royal hand, 'twill set me free!
> 'Tis but removing of a man—that's me."

A worse joke never secured for its author a greater boon—that of liberty.

With all this, an incident of the following year proves that the players disregarded peril, and found profit in excitement. For Shrovetide, 1625, they

announced a play founded on the Dutch horrors at Amboyna, but the performance was stopped, on the application of the East India Company, "for fear of disturbances this Shrovetide." A watch of 800 men was set to keep all quiet on Shrove Tuesday; and the subject was not again selected for a piece till 1673, when Dryden's "Amboyna" was produced in Drury Lane, and the cruelties of the Dutch condemned in a serio-comic fashion, as those of a people —so the epilogue intimated to the public—"who have no more religion faith—than you."

In James's days, the greater or less prevalence of the plague regulated the licences for playing. Thus, permission was given to the Queen's Servants to act "in their several houses, the Curtain, and the Boar's Head, Middlesex, as soon as the plague decreases to 30 a week, in London." So, in the very first year of Charles I., 1625, the "common players" have leave not only to act where they will, but "to come to court, now the plague is reduced to six." Accordingly, there was a merry Christmas season at Hampton Court, the actors being there; and, writes Rudyard to Nethercole, "the *demoiselles*" (maids of honour, doubtless), "mean to present a French pastoral, wherein the Queen is a principal actress." Thus, the example set by the late Queen Anne and now adopted by Henrietta Maria, led to the introduction of actresses on the public stage, and it was the manifestation of a taste for acting exhibited by the French princess, that led to the appearance in London of actresses of that nation.

With the reign of Charles I. new hopes came to the poor player, but therewith came new adversaries. Charles I. was a hearty promoter of all sports and pleasures, provided his people would be merry and wise according to his prescription only. Wakes and maypoles were authorised by him, to the infinite disgust of the Puritans, who liked the authorisation no more than they did the suppression of lectures. When Charles repaired to church, where the *Book of Sports* was read, he was exposed to the chance of hearing the minister, after reading the decree as he was ordered, calmly go through the Ten Commandments, and then tell his hearers, that having listened to the commands of God and those of man, they might now follow which they liked best.

When Bishop Williams, of Lincoln, and subsequently Archbishop of York, held a living, he pleaded in behalf of the right of his Northamptonshire parishioners to dance round the maypole. When ordered to deliver up the Great Seal by the King, he retired to his episcopal palace at Buckden, where, says Hacket, "he was the worse thought of by some strict censurers, because he admitted in his public hall a comedy once or twice to be presented before him, exhibited by his own servants, for an evening recreation." Being then in disgrace, this simple matter was exaggerated by his enemies into a report, that on an Ordination Sunday, this arrogant Welshman had entertained his newly-ordained clergy with a representation of Shakspeare's "Midsummer's Night's Dream," the actors in which had

been expressly brought down from London for the purpose!

In the troubled days in which King Charles and Bishop Williams lived, the stage suffered with the throne and church. After this time the names of the old houses cease to be familiar. Let us take a parting glance of these primitive temples of our drama

The royal theatre, Blackfriars, was the most nobly patronised of all the houses opened previous to the Restoration. The grown-up actors were the most skilled of their craft; and the boys, or apprentices, were the most fair and effeminate that could be procured, and could profit by instruction. On this stage Shakspeare enacted the Ghost in "Hamlet," Old Adam, and a similar line of characters, usually intrusted to the ablest of the performers of the second class. Blackfriars was a winter house. Some idea of its capability and pretension may be formed from the fact, that in 1633 its proprietors, the brothers Burbage,[1] let it to the actors for a yearly rent of £50. In 1655 it was pulled down,[2] after a successful career of about three-quarters of a century.

Upon the strip of shore, between Fleet Street and the Thames, there have been erected three theatres. In the year 1580, the old monastery of Whitefriars was given up to a company of players; but the

[1] The owners seem to have been Cuthbert and William Burbage, uncle and nephew.

[2] The year of its destruction seems uncertain.

Whitefriars' Theatre did not enjoy a very lengthened career. In the year 1616, that in which Shakspeare died, it had already fallen into disrepute and decay, and was never afterwards used for the representation of dramatic pieces. The other theatres, in Dorset Gardens, were built subsequently to the Restoration.

In the parish of St. Giles's, Cripplegate, and in the street now called Playhouse Yard, connecting Whitecross Street with Golding Lane, stood the old Fortune, erected in 1600, for Henslowe (the pawnbroker and money-lender to actors) and Alleyn, the most unselfish of comedians. It was a wooden tenement, which was burned down in 1621, and replaced by a circular brick edifice. In 1649, two years after the suppression of plays by the Puritan Act, when the house was closed, a party of soldiers, "the sectaries of those yeasty times," broke into the edifice, destroyed its interior fittings, and pulled down the building.[1] The site and adjacent ground were soon covered by dwelling-houses.

Meanwhile, the inn yards, or great rooms at the inns, were not yet quite superseded. The Cross Keys in Gracechurch Street, the Bull in Bishopsgate Street, near which lived Anthony Bacon, to the extreme dislike of his grandmother; and the Red Bull, in St. John Street, Clerkenwell, which last existed as late as the period of the Great Fire, were open, if not for the acting of plays, at least for exhibitions of fencing and wrestling.

[1] It was standing in 1661; in which year it was advertised for sale, with the ground belonging to it.

The Surrey side of the Thames was a favourite locality for plays, long before the most famous of the regular and royally-sanctioned theatres. The Globe was on that old joyous Bankside; and the Little Rose, in 1584, there succeeded to an elder structure of the same name, whose memory is still preserved in Rose Alley. The Globe, the summer-house of Shakspeare and his fellows, flourished from 1594 to 1613, when it fell a prey to the flames caused by the wadding of a gun, which lodged in and set fire to the thatched roof. The new house, erected by a royal and noble subscription, was of wood, but it was tiled. Its career, however, was not very extended, for in 1654, the owner of the freehold, Sir Matthew Brand, pulled the house down; and the name of Globe Alley is all that is left to point out the whereabouts of the popular summer-house in Southwark.

On the same bank of the great river stood the Hope, a play-house four times a week, and a garden for bear-baiting on the alternate days. In the former was first played Jonson's "Bartholomew Fair." When plays were suppressed, the zealous and orthodox soldiery broke into the Hope, horsewhipped the actors, and shot the bears. This place, however, in its character of Bear Garden, rallied after the Restoration, and continued prosperous till nearly the close of the seventeenth century. There remains to be noticed, Paris Garden, famous for its cruel but well-patronised sports. Its popular circus was converted by Henslowe and Alleyn into a theatre. Here, the richest receipts were made on the Sunday, till the

law interfered, and put down these performances, the dear delight of the Southwarkians and their visitors from the opposite shore, of the olden time.

The supposed assertion of Taylor, the Water poet, has often been quoted, namely, that between Windsor Bridge and Gravesend there were not less than 40,000 watermen, and that more than half of these found employment in transporting the holiday folks from the Middlesex to the Southwark shore of the river, where the players were strutting their little hour at the *Globe*, the *Rose*, and the *Swan*, and Bruin was being baited in the adjacent gardens. A misprint has decupled what was about the true number, and even of these, many were so unskilful that an Act was passed in the very first year of King James, for the protection of persons afloat, whether on pleasure or serious business.

In Holywell Lane, near High Street, Shoreditch, is the site of an old wooden structure which bore the distinctive name of "The Theatre," and was accounted a sumptuous house, probably because of the partial introduction of scenery there. In the early part of Shakspeare's career, as author and actor, it was closed, in consequence of proprietary disputes; and with the materials the Globe, at Bankside, was rebuilt or considerably enlarged. There was a second theatre in this district called "The Curtain," a name still retained in Curtain Road. This house remained open and successful, till the accession of Charles I., subsequent to which time stage plays gave way to exhibitions of athletic exercises.

This district was especially dramatic; the popular taste was not only there directed towards the stage, but it was a district wherein many actors dwelt, and consequently died. The baptismal register of St. Leonard's contains Christian names which appear to have been chosen with reference to the heroines of Shakspeare; and the record of burials bears the name of many an old actor of mark whose remains now lie within the churchyard.

Not a vestige, of course, exists of any of these theatres; and yet of a much older house traces may be seen by those who will seek them in remote Cornwall.

This relic of antiquity is called Piran Round. It consists of a circular embankment, about ten feet high, sloping backwards, and cut into steps for seats or standing-places. This embankment encloses a level area of grassy ground, and stands in the middle of a flat, wild heath. A couple of thousand spectators could look down from the seats upon the grassy circus which formed a stage of more than a hundred feet in diameter. Here, in very early times, sports were played and combats fought out, and rustic councils assembled. The ancient Cornish Mysteries here drew tears and laughter from the mixed audiences of the day. They were popular as late as the period of Shakspeare. Of one of them, a five act piece, entitled "The Creation of the World, with Noah's Flood," the learned Davies Gilbert has given a translation. In this historical piece, played for edification in Scripture history, the

stage directions speak of varied costumes, variety of scenery, and complicated machinery, all on an open-air stage, whereon the deluge was to roll its billows and the mimic world be lost. This cataclysm achieved, the depressed spectators were rendered merry. The minstrels piped, the audience rose and footed it, and then, having had their full of amusement, they who had converged, from so many starting points, upon Piran Round, scattered again on their several ways homeward from the ancient theatre, and as the sun went down, thinned away over the heath, the fishermen going seaward, the miners inland, and the agricultural labourers to the cottages and farm-houses which dotted, here and there, the otherwise dreary moor.

Such is Piran Round described to have been, and the "old house" is worthy of tender preservation, for it once saved England from invasion! About the year 1600, "some strollers," as they are called in Somer's Tracts, were playing late at night at Piran. At the same time a party of Spaniards had landed with the intention of surprising, plundering, and burning the village. As the enemy were silently on their way to this consummation, the players, who were representing a battle, "struck up a loud alarum with drum and trumpet on the stage, which the enemy hearing, thought they were discovered, made some few idle shots, and so in a hurly-burly fled to their boats. And thus the townsmen were apprised of their danger, and delivered from it at the same time."

Thus the players rescued the kingdom! Their sons and successors were not so happy in rescuing their King; but the powerful enemies of each suppressed both real and mimic kings. How they dealt with the monarchs of the stage, our prologue at an end, remains to be told.

Mr. Garrick as Sir John Brute.

THE SWAN THEATRE.

CHAPTER II.

THE DECLINE AND FALL OF THE PLAYERS.

It was in the eventful year 1587,[1] while Roman Catholics were deploring the death of Mary Stuart; while Englishmen were exulting at the destruction dealt by Drake to a hundred Spanish ships in the port of Cadiz; while the Puritan party was at angry issue with Elizabeth; while John Fox was lying dead; and while Walsingham was actively impeding the ways and means of Armada Philip, by getting his bills protested at Genoa,—that the little man, Gosson,

[1] Should be 1579. Stephen Gosson's *Schoole of Abuse* was entered at Stationers' Hall, July 22, 1579. Dr. Doran corrects this in the second edition.

in the parish of St. Botolph, of which he was the incumbent, first nibbed his pen,[1] and made it fly furiously over paper, in wordy war against the stage and stage-players.

When the Britons ate acorns and drank water, he says, they were giants and heroes; but since plays came in they had dwindled into a puny race, incapable of noble and patriotic achievements! And yet next year, some pretty fellows of that race were sweeping the Invincible Armada from the surface of our seas!

When London was talking admiringly of the coronation of Charles I., and Parliament was barely according him one pound in twelve of the money-aids of which he was in need, there was another pamphleteer sending up his testimony from Cheapside to Westminster, against the alleged abomination of plays and players. This writer entitles his work *A short Treatise against Stage Plays*, and he makes it as sharp as it is short. Plays were invented by heathens; they must necessarily be prejudicial to Christians!—*that* is the style of his assertion and argument. They were invented in order to appease false gods; consequently, the playing of them must excite to wrath a true Deity! They are no recreation, because people come away from them wearied. The argument, in tragedy, he informs us, is murder; in comedy, it is social vice. This he designates as bad instruction; and remembering Field's query to Sutton, he would very much like to know in what

[1] Gosson was not made rector of St. Botolph till 1600.

page of Holy Writ authority is given for the vocation of an actor. He might as well have asked for the suppression of tailors, on the ground of their never being once named in either the Old Testament or the New!

But this author finds condemnation there of "stage effects," rehearsed or unrehearsed. You deal with the judgments of God in tragedy, and laugh over the sins of men in comedy; and thereupon he reminds you, not very appositely, that Ham was accursed for deriding his father! Players change their apparel and put on women's attire,—as if they had never read a chapter in Deuteronomy in their lives! If coming on the stage under false representation of their natural names and persons be not an offence against the Epistle to Timothy, he would thank you to inform him *what* it is! As to looking on these pleasant evils and not falling into sin,—you have heard of Job and King David, and you are worse than a heathen if you do not remember what *they* looked upon with innocent intent, or if you have forgotten what came of the looking.

He reminds parents, that while *they* are at the play, there are wooers who are carrying off the hearts of their daughters at home; perhaps, the very daughters themselves *from* home. This seems to me to be less an argument against resorting to the theatre than in favour of your taking places for your "young ladies," as well as for yourselves. The writer looks too wide abroad to see what lies at his feet. He is in Asia, citing the Council of Laodicea

against the theatre. He is in Africa, vociferating, as the Council of Carthage did, against audiences. He is in Europe, at Arles, where the Fathers decided that no actor should be admitted to the sacrament. Finally, he unites all these Councils together at Constantinople, and in a three-piled judgment sends stage, actors, and audiences to Gehenna.

If you would only remember that many royal and noble men have been slain when in the theatre, on their way thither, or returning thence, you will have a decent horror of risking a similar fate in like localities. He has known actors who have died after the play was over; he would fain have you believe that there is something in *that*. And when he has intimated that theatres have been burnt and audiences suffocated; that stages have been swept down by storms and spectators trodden to death; that less than forty years previous to the time of his writing, eight persons had been killed and many more wounded, by the fall of a London playhouse; and that a similar calamity had lately occurred in the city of Lyons—the writer conceives he has advanced sufficient argument, and administered more than enough of admonition, to deter any person from entering a theatre henceforth and for ever.

This paper pellet had not long been printed, when the vexed author might have seen four actors sailing joyously along the Strand. There they are, Master Moore (there were no *managers* then; they were "masters" till the Georgian era), Master Moore, heavy Foster, mirthful Guilman, and airy

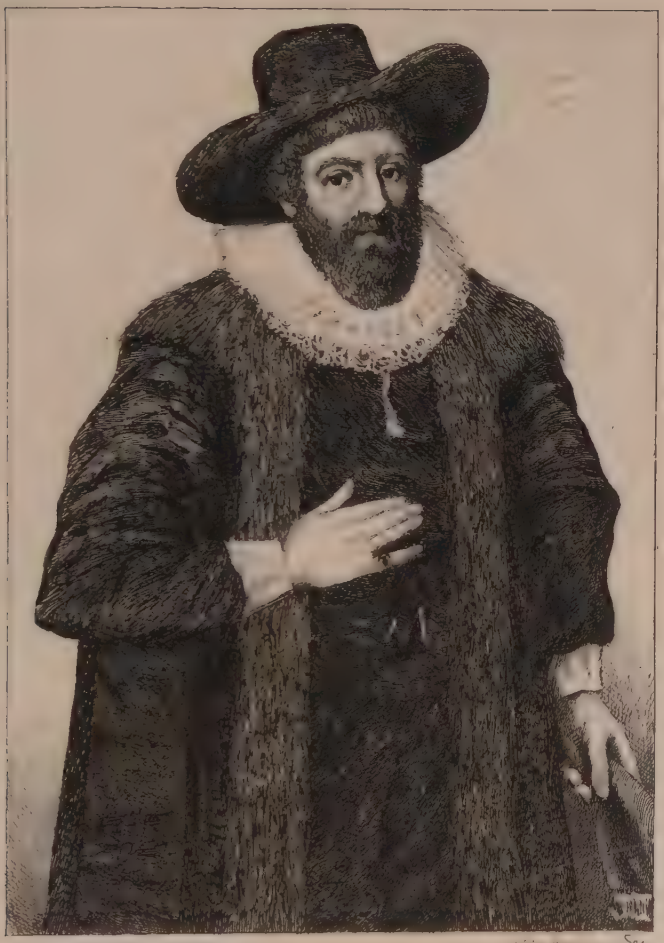
Townsend. The master carries in his pocket a royal licence to form a company, whose members, in honour of the King's sister, shall be known as "the Lady Elizabeth's servants;" with permission to act when and where they please, in and about the city of London, unless when the plague shall be more than ordinarily prevalent.

There was no present opportunity to touch these licensed companies; and, accordingly, a sect of men who professed to unite loyalty with orthodoxy, looking eagerly about them for offenders, detected an unlicensed fraternity playing a comedy in the old house, before noticed, of Sir John Yorke. The result of this was the assembling of a nervously-agitated troop of offenders in the Star Chamber. One Christopher Mallory was made the scapegoat, for the satisfactory reason that in the comedy alluded to he had represented the devil, and in the last scene descended through the stage, with a figure of King James on his back, remarking the while, that such was the road by which all Protestants must necessarily travel! Poor Mallory, condemned to fine and imprisonment, vainly observed that there were two points, he thought, in his favour—that he had not played in the piece, and had not been even present in the house!

Meanwhile the public flocked to their favourite houses, and fortune seemed to be most blandly smiling on "masters," when there suddenly appeared the monster mortar manufactured by Prynne, and discharged by him over London, with an attendant

amount of thunder, which shook every building in the metropolis. Prynne had just previously seen the painters busily at work in beautifying the old "Fortune," and the decorators gilding the horns of the "Red Bull." He had been down to Whitefriars, and had there beheld a new theatre rising near the old time-honoured site. He was unable to be longer silent, and in 1633 out came his *Histrio-Mastix*, consisting, from title-page to *finis*, of a thousand and several hundred pages.

Prynne, in some sense, did not lead opinion against the stage, but followed that of individuals who suffered certain discomfort from their vicinity to the chief house in Blackfriars. In 1631, the churchwardens and constables petitioned Laud, on behalf of the whole parish, for the removal of the players, whose presence was a grievance, it was asserted, to Blackfriars generally. The shopkeepers affirm that their goods, exposed for sale, are swept off their stalls by the coaches and people sweeping onward to the playhouse; that the concourse is so great, the inhabitants are unable to take beer or coal into their houses while it continues; that to get through Ludgate to the water is just impossible; and if a fire break out Heaven help them, how can succour be brought to the sufferers through such mobs of men and vehicles? Christenings are disturbed in their joy by them, and the sorrow of burials intruded on. Persons of honour dare not go abroad, or if abroad, dare not venture home while the theatre is open. And then there is that other



house, Edward Alleyn's, rebuilding in Golden Lane, and will not the Council look to it?

The Council answer that Queen Henrietta Maria is well affected towards plays, and that therefore good regulation is more to be provided than suppression decreed. There must not be more than two houses, they say; one on Bankside, where the Lord Chamberlain's servants may act; the other in Middlesex, for which license may be given to Alleyn, "servant of the Lord Admiral," in Golden Lane. Each company is to play but twice a week, "forbearing to play on the Sabbath Day, in Lent, and in times of infection."

Here is a prospect for old Blackfriars; but it is doomed to fall. The house had been condemned in 1619, and cannot longer be tolerated. But compensation must be awarded. The players, bold fellows, claim £21,000! The referees award £3000, and the delighted inhabitants offer £100 towards it, to get rid of the people who resort to the players, rather than of the players themselves.

Then spake out Prynne. He does not tell us how many prayer-books had been recently published, but he notes, with a cry of anguish, the printing of forty thousand plays within the last two years. "There are five devil's chapels," he says, "in London; and yet in more extensive Rome, in Nero's days, there were but three, and those," he adds, "were three too many!" When the writer gets beyond statistics he grows rude; but he was sincere, and accepted all the responsibility of the course taken by him, advisedly.

While the anger excited by this attack on pastimes favoured by the King was yet hot, the assault itself was met by a defiance. The gentlemen of the Inns of Court closed their law-books, got up a masque, and played it at Whitehall, in the presence of a delighted audience, consisting of royal and noble personages. The most play-loving of the lords followed the example afforded by the lawyers, and the King himself assumed the buskin, and turned actor, for the nonce. Tom Carew was busy with superintending the rehearsals of his "Cœlum Britannicum," and in urging honest and melodious Will Lawes to progress more rapidly with the music. Cavalier Will was not to be hurried, but did his work steadily; and Prynne might have heard him and his brother Harry humming the airs over as they walked together across the park to Whitehall. When the day of representation arrived, great was the excitement and intense the delight of some, and the scorn of others. Among the noble actors who rode down to the palace was Rich, Earl of Holland. All passed off so pleasantly that no one dreamed it was the inauguration of a struggle in which Prynne was to lose his estate, his freedom, and his ears; the King and the earl their heads; while gallant Will Lawes, as honest a man as any of them, was, a dozen years after, to be found among the valiant dead who fell at the siege of Chester.

Ere this *dénoûment* to a tragedy so mirthfully commenced had been reached, there were other defiances cast in the teeth of audacious, but too

harshly-treated Prynne. There was a reverend playwright about town, whom Eton loved and Oxford highly prized; Ben Jonson called him his "son," and Bishop Fell, who presumed to give an opinion on subjects of which he was ignorant, pronounced the Rev. William Cartwright to be "the utmost that man could come to!" For the Christ Church students at Oxford, Cartwright wrote the "Royal Slave," one of three out of his four plays which sleep under a righteous oblivion. The King and Queen went down to witness the performance of the scholastic amateurs; and, considering that a main incident of the piece comprises a revolt in order to achieve some reasonable liberty for an oppressed people, the subject may be considered more suggestive than felicitous. The fortunes of many of the audience were about to undergo mutation, but there was an actor there whose prosperity commenced from that day. All the actors played with spirit, but this especial one manifested such self-possession, displayed such judgment, and exhibited such powers of conception and execution, that King, Queen, and all the illustrious audience showered down upon him applauses—hearty, loud, and long. His name was Busby. He had been so poor that he received £5 to enable him to take his degree of B.A. Westminster was soon to possess him, for nearly threescore years the most famous of her "masters." "A very great man!" said Sir Roger de Coverley; "he whipped my grandfather!"

When Prynne, and Bastwick, and Burton—released

from prison by the Long Parliament—entered London in triumph, with wreaths of ivy and rosemary round their hats, the players who stood on the causeway, or at tavern windows, to witness the passing of the victims, must have felt uneasy at their arch-enemy being loose again. Between politics, perverse parties, the plague, and the parliament, the condition of the actors fell from bad to worse. In a dialogue which professedly passed at this time between Cane of the "Fortune" and Reed of the "Friers," one of the speakers deplores the going-out of all good old things, and the other, sighingly, remarks that true Latin is as little in fashion at Inns of Court as good clothes are at Cambridge. At length arrived the fatal year 1647, when, after some previous attempts to abolish the vocation of the actors, the parliament disbanded the army and suppressed the players. The latter struggled manfully, but not so successfully, as the soldiery. They were treated with less consideration; the decree of February 1647[1] informed them that they were no better than heathens; that they were intolerable to Christians; that they were incorrigible and vicious offenders, who would now be compelled by whip, and stocks, and gyves, and prison fare, to obey ordinances which they had hitherto treated with contempt. Had not the glorious Elizabeth stigmatised them as "rogues," and the sagacious James as "vagabonds?" Mayors and sheriffs, and high and low constables were let loose

[1] February 1647–48: that is, February 1648. This act succeeded the one mentioned in the next paragraph.

upon them, and encouraged to be merciless; menace was piled upon menace; money penalties were hinted at in addition to corporeal punishments—and, after all, plays were enacted in spite of this counter-enactment.

But these last enactors were not to be trifled with; and the autumn saw accomplished what had not been effected in the spring. The *Perfect Weekly Account* for "Wednesday, Oct. 20, to Tuesday, Oct. 26," informs its readers that on "Friday an ordinance passed both Houses for suppressing of stage-plays, which of late began to come in use again." The ordinance itself is as uncivil a document as ever proceeded from ruffled authority; and the framers clearly considered that if they had not crushed the stage for ever, they had unquestionably frozen out the actors as long as the existing government should endure.

At this juncture, historians inform us that many of the ousted actors took military service—generally, as was to be expected, on the royalist side. But, in 1647, the struggle was virtually over. The great fire was quenched, and there was only a trampling out of sparks and embers. Charles Hart, the actor—grandson of Shakspeare's sister—holds a prominent place among these players turned soldiers as one who rose to be a major in Rupert's Horse. Charles Hart, however, was at this period only seventeen years of age, and more than a year and a half had elapsed since Rupert had been ordered beyond sea, for his weak defence of Bristol. Rupert's major was, pro-

bably, that very "jolly good fellow" with whom Pepys used to take wine and anchovies to such excess as to make it necessary for his "girl" to rise early, and fetch her sick master fresh water, wherewith to slake his thirst, in the morning.

The enrolment of actors in either army occurred at an earlier period, and one Hart was certainly among them. Thus Alleyn, erst of the Cockpit, filled the part of quartermaster-general to the King's army at Oxford. Burt became a cornet, Shatterel was something less dignified in the same branch of the service —the cavalry. These survived to see the old curtain once more drawn; but record is made of the death of one gallant player, said to be Will Robinson, whom doughty Harrison encountered in fight, and through whom he passed his terrible sword, shouting at the same time: "Cursed is he that doeth the work of the Lord negligently!" This serious bit of stage business would have been more dramatically arranged had Robinson been encountered by Swanston, a player of Presbyterian tendencies, who served in the Parliamentary army. A "terrific broadsword combat" between the two might have been an encounter which both armies might have looked at with interest, and supported by applause. Of the military fortunes of the actors none was so favourable as brave little Mohun's, who crossed to Flanders, returned a major, and was subsequently set down in the "cast" under his military title. Old Taylor retired, with that original portrait of Shakspeare to solace him, which was to pass by the hands of

Davenant, to that glory of our stage, "Incomparable Betterton." Pollard, too, withdrew, and lusty Lowen, after a time, kicked both sock and buskin out of sight, clapped on an apron, and appeared, with well-merited success, as landlord of the Three Pigeons, at Brentford.

The actors could not comprehend why their office was suppressed, while the bear-baiters were putting money in both pockets, and non-edifying puppet-shows were enriching their proprietors. If Shakspeare was driven from Blackfriars and the Cockpit, was it fair to allow Bel and the Dragon to be enacted by dolls, at the foot of Holborn Bridge? The players were told that the public would profit by the abolition of their vocation. Loose young gentlemen, fast merchant-factors, and wild young apprentices were no longer to be seen, it was said, hanging about the theatres, spending all their spare money, much that they could not spare, and not a little which was not theirs to spend. It was uncivilly suggested that the actors were a merry sort of thieves, who used to attach themselves to the puny gallants who sought their society, and strip them of the gold pieces in their pouches, the bodkin on their thighs, the girdles buckled to give them shape, and the very beavers jauntily plumed to lend them grace and stature.

In some of the streets by the river-side a tragedy-king or two found refuge with kinsfolk. The old theatres stood erect and desolate, and the owners, with hands in empty pockets, asked how they were

to be expected to pay ground-rent, now that they earned nothing? whereas their afternoon-share used to be twenty—ay, thirty shillings, sir! And see, the flag is still flying above the old house over the water, and a lad who erst played under it, looks up at the banner with a proud sorrow. An elder actor puts his hands on the lad's shoulder, and cries: "Before the old scene is on again, boy, thy face will be as battered as the flag there on the roof-top!" And as this elder actor passes on, he has a word with a poor fellow-mime who has been less provident than he, and whose present necessities he relieves according to his means. Near them stand a couple of deplorable-looking "door-keepers," or, as we should call them now, "money-takers," and the well-to-do ex-actor has his allusive joke at their old rascality, and affects to condole with them that the time is gone by when they used to scratch their neck where it itched not, and then dropped shilling and half-crown pieces behind their collars! But they were not the only poor rogues who suffered by revolution. That slipshod tapster, whom a guest is cudgelling at a tavern-door, was once the proudest and most extravagantly-dressed of the tobacco-men whose notice the smokers in the pit gingerly entreated, and who used to vend, at a penny the pipeful, tobacco that was not worth a shilling a cart-load. And behold other evidences of the hardness of the times! Those shuffling fiddlers who so humbly peer through the low windows into the tavern room, and meekly inquire: "Will you have any music,

gentlemen?" they are tuneful relics of the band who were wont to shed harmony from the balcony above the stage, and play in fashionable houses, at the rate of ten shillings for each hour. *Now*, they shamble about in pairs, and resignedly accept the smallest dole, and think mournfully of the time when they heralded the coming of kings, and softly tuned the dirge at the burying of Ophelia!

Even these have pity to spare for a lower class than themselves,—the journeymen playwrights, whom the managers once retained at an annual stipend and "beneficial second nights." The old playwrights were fain to turn pamphleteers, but their works sold only for a penny, and that is the reason why those two shabby-genteel people, who have just nodded sorrowfully to the fiddlers, are not joyously tippling sack and Gascony wine, but are imbibing unorthodox ale and heretical small beer. "*Cunctis graviora cothurnis!*" murmurs the old actor, whose father was a schoolmaster; "it's more pitiful than any of your tragedies!"

The distress was severe, but the profession had to abide it. Much amendment was promised, if only something of the old life might be pursued without peril of the stocks or the whipping-post. The authorities would not heed these promises, but grimly smiled—at the actors, who undertook to promote virtue; the poets, who engaged to be proper of speech; the managers, who bound themselves to prohibit the entrance of all temptations into "the sixpenny rooms;" and the tobacco-men, who swore with

earnest irreverence to vend nothing but the pure Spanish leaf, even in the threepenny galleries.

But the tragedy which ended with the killing of the King gave sad hearts to the comedians, who were in worse plight than before, being now deprived of hope itself. One or two contrived to print and sell old plays for their own benefit; a few authors continued to add a new piece, now and then, to the stock, and that there were readers for them we may conjecture from the fact of the advertisements which began to appear in the papers—sometimes of the publication of a solitary play, at another of the entire dramatic works of that most noble lady the Marchioness of Newcastle. The actors themselves united boldness with circumspection. Richard Cox, dropping the words *play* and *player*, constructed a mixed entertainment, in which he spoke and sang; and on one occasion so aptly mimicked the character of an artisan, that a master in the craft kindly and earnestly offered to engage him. During the suppression, Cowley's "Guardian" was privately played at Cambridge. The authorities would seem to have winked at these private representations, or to have declined noticing them until after the expiration of the period within which the actors were exposed to punishment. Too great audacity, however, was promptly and severely visited from the earliest days after the issuing of the prohibitory decree. A first-rate troop obtained possession of the Cockpit for a few days, in 1648. They had played unmolested for three days, and were in the very midst of "The Bloody Brother" on the fourth,

when the house was invaded by the Puritan soldiery, the actors captured, the audience dispersed, and the seats and the stage righteously smashed into fragments. The players (some of them among the most accomplished of their day) were paraded through the streets in all their stage finery, and clapped into the Gate House and other prisons, whence they were too happy to escape, after much unseemly treatment, at the cost of all the theatrical property which they had carried on their backs into durance vile.

This severity, visited in other houses as well as the Cockpit, caused some actors to despair, while it rendered others only a little more discreet. Rhodes, the old prompter at Blackfriars, turned bookseller, and opened a shop at Charing Cross. There he and one Betterton, an ex-under-cook in the kitchen of Charles I., who lived in Tothill Street, talked mournfully over the past, and, according to their respective humours, of the future. The cook's sons listened the while, and one of them especially took delight in hearing old stories of players, and in cultivating an acquaintance with the old theatrical bookseller. In the neighbourhood of the ex-prompter's shop, knots of very slenderly-built players used to congregate at certain seasons. A delegate from their number might be seen whispering to the citizen captain in command at Whitehall, who, as wicked people reported, consented, for a "consideration," not to bring his red-coats down to the Bull or other localities where private stages were erected—especially during the time of Bartholomew Fair, Christmas,

and other joyous tides. To his shame, be it recorded, the captain occasionally broke his promise, or the poor actors had fallen short in their purchase-money of his pledge, and in the very middle of the piece, the little theatre would be invaded, and the audience be rendered subject to as much virtuous indignation as the actors.

The cause of the latter, however, found supporters in many of the members of the aristocracy. Close at hand, near Rhodes's shop, lived Lord Hatton, first of the four peers so styled. His house was in Scotland Yard. His lands had gone by forfeiture, but the proud old Cheshire landowner cared more for the preservation of the deed by which he and his ancestors had held them, than he did for the loss of the acres themselves. Hatton was the employer, so to speak, of Dugdale, and the patron of literary men and of actors, and, it must be added, of very frivolous company besides. He devoted much time to the preparation of a Book of Psalms and the ill-treatment of his wife; and was altogether an eccentric personage, for he recommended Lambert's daughter as a personally and politically suitable wife for Charles II., and afterwards discarded his own eldest son for marrying that incomparable lady. In Hatton, the players had a supreme patron in town; and they found friends as serviceable to them in the noblemen and gentlemen residing a few miles from the capital. These patrons opened their houses to the actors for stage representations; but even this private patronage had to be distributed discreetly. Goffe,

the light-limbed lad who used to play women's parts at the "Blackfriars," was generally employed as messenger to announce individually to the audience when they were to assemble, and to the actors the time and place for the play. One of the mansions, wherein these dramatic entertainments were most frequently given, was Holland House, Kensington. It was then held and inhabited by the widowed countess of that unstable Earl of Holland, whose head had fallen on the scaffold in March 1649; but this granddaughter of old Sir Walter Cope, who lost Camden House at cards to a Cheapside mercer, Sir Baptist Hicks, was a strong-minded woman, and perhaps found some consolation in patronising the pleasures which the enemies of her defunct lord so stringently prohibited. When the play was over, a collection was made among the noble spectators, whose contributions were divided between the players according to the measure of their merits. This done they wended their way down the avenue to the high road, where probably, on some bright summer afternoon, if a part of them prudently returned afoot to town, a joyous but less prudent few "padded it" to Brentford, and made a short but glad night of it with their brother of the "Three Pigeons."

At the most this was but a poor life; but such as it was, the players were obliged to make the best of it. If they were impatient, it was not without some reason, for though Oliver despised the stage, he could condescend to laugh at, and with, men of less dignity in their vocation than actors. Buffoonery

was not entirely expelled from his otherwise grave court. At the marriage festival of his daughter Frances and his son-in-law Mr. Rich, the Protector would not tolerate the utterance of a line from Shakspeare, expressed from the lips of a player; but there were hired buffoons at that entertainment, which they well-nigh brought to a tragical conclusion. A couple of these saucy fellows seeing Sir Thomas Hillingsley, the old gentleman-usher to the Queen of Bohemia, gravely dancing, sought to excite a laugh by trying to blacken his face with a burnt cork. The high-bred, solemn old gentleman was so aroused to anger by this unseemly audacity, that he drew his dagger, and, but for swift interference, would have run it beneath the fifth rib of the most active of his rude assailants. On this occasion, Cromwell himself was almost as lively as the hired jesters; snatching off the wig of his son Richard, he feigned to fling it in the fire, but suddenly passing the wig under him, and seating himself upon it, he pretended that it had been destroyed, amid the servile applause of the edified spectators. The actors might reasonably have argued that "Hamlet" in Scotland Yard or at Holland House was a more worthy entertainment than such grown-up follies in the gallery at Whitehall.

Those follies ceased to be; Oliver had passed away, and Richard had laid down the greatness which had never sat well upon him. Important changes were at hand, and the merry rattle of Monk's drums coming up Gray's Inn Road, welcomed by

thousands of dusty spectators, announced no more cheering prospect to any class than to the actors. The Oxford vintner's son, Will Davenant, might be seen bustling about in happy hurry, eagerly showing young Betterton how Taylor used to play Hamlet, under the instruction of Burbage, and announcing bright days to open-mouthed Kynaston, ready at a moment's warning to leap over his master's counter, and take his standing at the balcony as the smooth-cheeked Juliet.

Meanwhile, beaming old Rhodes, with a head full of memories of the joyous Blackfriars' days, and the merry afternoons over the water, at the Globe, leaving his once apprentice, Betterton, listening to Davenant's stage histories, and Kynaston, not yet out of his time, longing to flaunt it before an audience, took his own way to Hyde Park, where Monk was encamped, and there obtained, in due time, from that far-seeing individual, licence to once more raise the theatrical flag, enrol the actors, light up the stage, and, in a word, revive the English theatre. In a few days the drama commenced its new career in the Cockpit, in Drury Lane; and this fact seemed so significant, as to the character of General Monk's tastes that, subsequently, when he and the Council of State dined in the city halls, the companies treated their guests, after dinner, with satirical farces, such as "Citizen and Soldier," "Country Tom," and "City Dick," with, as the newspapers inform us, "dancing and singing, many shapes and ghosts, and the like; and all to please his Excellency the Lord General."

The English stage owes a debt of gratitude to both Monk and Rhodes. The former made glorious summer of the actors' winter of discontent; and the latter inaugurated the Restoration by introducing young Betterton. The son of Charles I.'s cook was, for fifty-one years, the pride of the English theatre. His acting was witnessed by more than one old contemporary of Shakspeare,—the poet's younger brother being among them,—he surviving till shortly after the accession of Charles II. The destitute actors warmed into life and laughter again beneath the sunshine of his presence. His dignity, his marvellous talent, his versatility, his imperishable fame, are all well known and acknowledged. His industry is indicated by the fact that he created one hundred and thirty new characters! Among them were Jaffier and Valentine, three Virginiuses, and Sir John Brute. He was as mirthful in Falstaff as he was majestic in Alexander; and the craft of his Ulysses, the grace and passion of his Hamlet, the terrible force of his Othello, were not more remarkable than the low comedy of his Old Bachelor, the airyness of his Woodville, or the cowardly bluster of his Thersites. The old actors who had been frozen out, and the new who had much to learn, could not have rallied round a more noble or a worthier chief; for Betterton was not a greater actor than he was a true and honourable gentleman. Only for him, the old frozen-outs would have fared but badly. He enriched himself and them, and, as long as he lived, gave dignity to his profession. The humble lad,

born in Tothill Street, before monarchy and the stage went down, had a royal funeral in Westminster Abbey, after dying in harness almost in sight of the lamps. He deserved no less, for he was the king of an art which had well-nigh perished in the Commonwealth times, and he was a monarch who probably has never since had, altogether, his equal. Off as on the stage, he was exemplary in his bearing; true to every duty; as good a country gentleman on his farm in Berkshire as he was perfect actor in town; pursuing with his excellent wife the even tenor of his way; not tempted by the vices of his time, nor disturbed by its politics; not tippling like Underhill; not plotting and betraying the plotters against William, like Goodman, nor carrying letters for a costly fee between London and St. Germains, like Scudamore. If there had been a leading player on the stage in 1647, with the qualities, public and private, which distinguished Betterton, there perhaps would have been a less severe ordinance than that which inflicted so much misery on the actors, and which, after a long decline, brought about a fall; from which they were, however, as we shall see, destined to rise and flourish.

THE GLOBE THEATRE.

CHAPTER III.

THE "BOY ACTRESSES," AND THE "YOUNG LADIES."

THE Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, is the "sacred ground" of the English drama since the restoration of monarchy. At the Cockpit (Pit Street remains a memory of the place), otherwise called the Phœnix, in the "lane" above-named, the old English actors had uttered their last words before they were silenced. In a reconstruction of the edifice near, rather than on, the old site, the young English actors, under Rhodes, built their new stage, and wooed the willing town.

There was some irregularity in the first steps

made to re-establish the stage, which, after an uneasy course of about four years, was terminated by Charles II., who, in 1663,[1] granted patents for two theatres, and no more, in London. Under one patent, Killigrew, at the head of the King's Company (the Cockpit being closed), opened at the new theatre in Drury Lane, in August[2] 1663, with a play of the olden time—the "Humourous Lieutenant" of Beaumont and Fletcher. Under the second patent, Davenant and the Duke of York's Company found a home—first at the old Cockpit, then in Salisbury Court, Fleet Street, the building of which was commenced in 1660, on the site of the old granary of Salisbury house, which had served for a theatre in the early years of the reign of Charles I. This little stage was lapped up by the great tongue of fire, by which many a nobler edifice was destroyed, in 1666. But previous to the fire, thence went Davenant and the Duke's troop to the old Tennis Court, the first of the three theatres in Portugal Row, on the south side of Lincoln's Inn Fields, from which the houses took their name.

In 1671, Davenant being dead, the company, under the nominal management of his widow, migrated to a house designed by Wren, and decorated by Grinling Gibbons. This was the Duke's Theatre, in Dorset Gardens. It was in close vicinity to the old Salisbury Court Theatre, and it pre-

[1] The second and final patents were dated—Killigrew's, 25th April 1662; Davenant's, 15th January 1663.

[2] April (2d edition). The exact date is 8th April, as given by Downes.

sented a double face—one towards Fleet Street, the other overlooking the terrace which gave access to visitors who came by the river. Later, this company was housed in Lincoln's Inn Fields again; but it migrated, in 1732, to Covent Garden, under Rich. Rich's house was burnt down in 1808, and its successor, built by Smirke, was destroyed in 1856. On the site of the latter now stands the Royal Italian Opera, the representative, in its way, of the line of houses wherein the Duke's Company struggled against their competitors of the King's.

The first house of those competitors in Drury Lane was burnt in 1672, but the King's Company took refuge in the "Fields" till Wren built the new house, opened in 1674. The two troops remained divided, yet not opposed, each keeping to its recognised stock pieces, till 1682, when Killigrew, having "shuffled off this mortal coil,"[1] the two companies, after due weeding, formed into one, and abandoning Lincoln's Inn to the tennis-players, Dorset Gardens to the wrestlers, and both to decay, they opened at the New Drury, built by Sir Christopher, on the 16th of November 1682. Wren's theatre was taken down in 1791; its successor, built by Holland, was opened in 1794, and was destroyed in 1809. The present edifice is the fourth which has occupied a site in Drury Lane. It is the work of Wyatt, and was opened in 1812.

[1] Killigrew died after, not before, the union of the two companies. Chalmers expressly says that he lived to see them united, and gives March 1683 as the time of his death.

Thus much for the edifice of the theatres of the last half of the seventeenth century. Before we come to the "ladies and gentlemen" who met upon the respective stages, and strove for the approval of the town, let me notice that, after the death of Oliver,[1] Davenant publicly exhibited a mixed entertainment, chiefly musical, but which was not held to be an infringement of the law against the acting of plays. Early in May 1659, Evelyn writes:—"I went to see a new opera, after the Italian way, in recitative music and scenes, much inferior to the Italian composure and magnificence; but it was prodigious, that in a time of such public consternation, such a vanity should be kept up or permitted." That these musical entertainments were something quite apart from "plays," is manifest by another entry in Evelyn's diary, in January 1661:—"After divers years since I had seen any play, I went to see acted 'The Scornful Lady,' at a new theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields."

Of Shakspeare's brother Charles, who lived to this period, Oldys says:—"This opportunity made the actors greedily inquisitive into every little circumstance, more especially in Shakspeare's dramatic character, which his brother could relate of him. But he, it seems, was so stricken in years, and possibly his memory so weakened by infirmities (which

[1] Davenant performed "The Siege of Rhodes" two years before Cromwell's death, namely, in 1656. [See Mr. Joseph Knight's Preface to his recent edition of the "Roscius Anglicanus."] Cromwell also permitted the entertainment named "The Cruelty of the Spaniards in Peru" to be represented, from political motives.

might make him the easier pass for a man of weak intellects), that he could give them but little light into their inquiries; and all that could be recollected from him of his brother *Will* in that station, was the faint, general, and almost lost ideas he had of having once seen him act a part in one of his own comedies, wherein being to personate a decrepit old man, he wore a long beard, and appeared so weak and drooping, and unable to walk, that he was forced to be supported and carried by another person to a table, at which he was seated among some company who were eating, and one of them sung a song." This description applies to old Adam, in "As You Like It;" and he who feebly shadowed it forth, formed a link which connected the old theatre with the new.

The principal actors in Killigrew's Company, from which that of Drury Lane is descended, were Bateman, Baxter, Bird (Theophilus), Blagden, Burt, Cartwright, Clun, Duke, Hancock, Hart, Kynaston, Lacy, Mohun, the Shatterels (William and Robert), and Wintersel. Later additions gave to this company Beeston, Bell, Charleton, "Scum" Goodman, Griffin, Hains, Joe Harris, Hughes, Lyddoll, Reeves, and Shirley.

The "ladies" were Mrs. Corey, Eastland, Hughes, Knep, the Marshalls (Anne and Rebecca), Rutter, Uphill, whom Sir Robert Howard too tardily married, and Weaver. Later engagements included those of Mrs. Boutel, Gwyn (Nell), James, Reeves, and Verjuice. These were sworn at the Lord

Chamberlain's Office to serve the King. Of the "gentlemen," ten were enrolled on the Royal Household Establishment, and provided with liveries of scarlet cloth and silver lace. In the warrants of the Lord Chamberlain they were styled "*Gentlemen* of the Great Chamber;" and they might have pointed to this fact as proof of the dignity of their profession.

The company first got together by Rhodes, subsequently enlarged by Davenant, and sworn to serve the Duke of York, at Lincoln's Inn Fields, was in some respects superior to that of Drury Lane. Rhodes's troop included the great Betterton, Dixon, Lilliston, Lovel, Nokes (Robert), and six lads employed to represent female characters—Angel, William Betterton, a brother of the great actor (drowned early in life, at Wallingford), Floid, Kynaston (for a time), Mosely, and Nokes (James). Later, Davenant added Blagden, Harris, Price, and Richards; Medbourn, Norris, Sandford, Smith, and Young. The actresses were Mrs. Davenport, Davies, Gibbs, Holden, Jennings, Long, and Saunderson, whom Betterton shortly after married.

This new fashion of actresses was a French fashion, and the mode being imported from France, a French Company, with women among them, came over to London. Hoping for the sanction of their countrywoman, Queen Henrietta Maria, they established themselves in Blackfriars. This essay excited all the fury of Prynne, who called these actresses by very unsavoury names; but who, in

styling them "unwomanish and graceless," did not mean to imply that they were awkward and unfeminine, but that acting was unworthy of their sex, and unbecoming women born in an era of grace.

"Glad am I to say," remarks as stout a Puritan as Prynne, namely, Thomas Brand, in a comment addressed to Laud, "glad am I to say they were hissed, hooted, and pippin-pelted from the stage, so that I do not think they will soon be ready to try the same again." Although Brand asserts "that all virtuous and well-disposed persons in this town" were "justly offended" at these women "or monsters rather," as Prynne calls them, "expelled from their own country," adds Brand, yet more sober-thinking people did not fail to see the propriety of Juliet being represented by a girl rather than by a boy. Accordingly, we hear of English actresses even before the Restoration, mingled, however, with boys, who shared with them that "line of business." "The boy's a pretty actor," says Lady Strangelove, in the "Court Beggar," played at the Cockpit, in 1632, "and his mother can play her part. The women now are in great request." Prynne groaned at the "request" becoming general. "They have now," he writes, in 1633, "their female players in Italy and other foreign parts."

Davenant's "Siege of Rhodes" was privately acted[1] by amateurs, including Matthew Locke and

[1] Mr. Knight, in the Preface before mentioned, quotes some lines from the Prologue to this performance, showing that it was a public performance for money. This being so settles the question in the next paragraph as to the identity of the first professional actress.

Henry Purcell; the parts of Ianthe and Roxalana were played by Mrs. Edward Coleman and another lady. The piece is so stuffed with heroic deeds, heroic love, and heroic generosity, that none more suitable could be found for ladies to appear in. Nevertheless, when Rhodes was permitted to reopen the stage, he could only assemble boys about him for his Evadnes, Aspasias, and the other heroines of ancient tragedy.

Now, the resumption of the old practice of "women's parts being represented by men in the habits of women," gave offence, and this is assigned as a reason in the first patents accorded to Killigrew and Davenant why those managers were authorised to employ actresses to represent all female characters. Killigrew was the first to avail himself of the privilege. It was time. Some of Rhodes's "boys" were men past forty, who frisked it as wenches of fifteen; even real kings were kept waiting because theatrical queens had not yet shaved; when they did appear, they looked like "the guard disguised," and when the prompter called "Desdemona"—"enter GIANT!" *Who* the lady was who first trod the stage as a professional actress is not known; but that she belonged to Killigrew's Company is certain. The character she assumed was Desdemona, and she was introduced by a prologue written for the occasion by Thomas Jordan. It can hardly be supposed that she was too modest to reveal her name, and that of Anne Marshal has been suggested, as also that of Margaret Hughes. On the 3d of January 1661, Beaumont

and Fletcher's "Beggar's Bush" was performed at Killigrew's Theatre, "it being very well done," says Pepys, "and here the first time that ever I saw women come upon the stage." Davenant did not bring forward *his* actresses before the end of June 1661, when he produced the second part of the "Siege of Rhodes," with Mrs. Davenport as Roxalana, and Mrs. Saunderson as Ianthe; both these ladies, with Mrs. Davies and Mrs. Long, boarded in Davenant's house. Killigrew abused his privilege to employ ladies. In 1664, his comedy, the "Parson's Wedding," wherein the plague is made a comic incident of, connected with unexampled profligacy, was acted, "I am *told*," are Pepys's own words, "by nothing but women, at the King's house."

By this time the vocation of the "boy-actresses" had altogether passed away; and there only remains for me to briefly trace the career of those old world representatives of the gentle or truculent heroines depicted by our early dramatists.

There were three members of Killigrew's, or the King's Company, who were admirable representatives of female characters before the Civil Wars. These were Hart, Burt, and Clun—all pupils of luckless Robinson, slain in fight, who was himself an accomplished "actress." Of the three, Hart rose to the greatest eminence. His Duchess, in Shirley's "Cardinal," was the most successful of his youthful parts. After the Restoration, he laid down Cassio to take Othello, from Burt, by the King's command, and was as great in the Moor as Betterton, at the

other house, was in Hamlet. His Alexander, which he *created*, always filled the theatre; and his dignity therein was said to convey a lesson even to kings. His Brutus was scarcely inferior, while his Catiline was so unapproachable, that when he died, Jonson's tragedy died with him.[1] Rymer styles him and Mohun the Æsopus and Roscius of their time. When they acted together (Amintor and Melantius) in the "Maid's Tragedy," the town asked no greater treat. Hart was one of Pepys's prime favourites. He was a man whose presence delighted the eye, before his accents enchanted the ear. The humblest character intrusted to him was distinguished by his careful study. On the stage he acknowledged no audience; their warmest applause could never draw him into a moment's forgetfulness of his assumed character. In Manly, "The Plain Dealer," as in Catiline, he never found a successor who could equal him. His salary was, at the most, three pounds a week, but he is said to have realised £1000 yearly after he became a shareholder in the theatre. He finally retired in 1682, on a pension amounting to half his salary, which he enjoyed, however, scarcely a year. He died of a painful inward complaint in 1683, and was buried at Stanmore Magna.

There is a tradition that Hart, Mohun, and Betterton fought on the King's side at Edgehill, in 1642. The last-named was then a child, and some things are attributed to Charles Hart which

[1] Very questionable. Langbaine (1691) says, "This play is still in vogue on the stage, and always presented with success."

belonged to his father. If Charles was but eighteen when his namesake, the King, returned in 1660, it must have been his father who was at Edgehill with Mohun, and who, perhaps, played female characters in his early days.

Burt, after he left off the women's gear, acted Cicero, with rare ability, in "Catiline," for the getting up of which piece Charles II. contributed £500 for robes. Of Clun, in or out of petticoats, the record is brief. His Iago was superior to Mohun's, but Lacy excelled him in the "Humourous Lieutenant;" but as Subtle, in the "Alchymist," he was the admiration of all playgoers. After acting this comic part, Clun made a tragic end on the night of the 3d of August 1664. With a lady hanging on his arm, and some liquor lying under his belt, he was gaily passing on his way to his country lodgings in Kentish Town, when he was assailed, murdered, and flung into a ditch, by rogues, one of whom was captured, "an Irish fellow, most cruelly butchered and bound." "The house will have a great miss of him," is the epitaph of Pepys upon versatile Clun.

Of the boys belonging to Davenant's Company, who at first appeared in woman's boddice, but soon found their occupation gone, some were of greater fame than others. One of these, Angel, turned from waiting-maids to low comedy, caricatured Frenchmen and foolish lords. We hear nothing of him after 1673. The younger Betterton, as I have said, was drowned at Wallingford. Mosely and Floid represented a vulgar class of women, and both died

before the year 1674; but Kynaston and James Nokes long survived to occupy prominent positions on the stage.

Kynaston made "the loveliest lady," for a boy, ever beheld by Pepys. This was in 1660, when Kynaston played Olympia, the Duke's sister, in the "Loyal Subject;" and went with a young fellow-actor to carouse, after the play, with Pepys and Captain Ferrers. Kynaston was a handsome fellow under every guise. On the 7th of January 1661, says Pepys, "Tom and I, and my wife, to the theatre, and there saw 'The Silent Woman.' Among other things here, Kynaston, the boy, had the good turn to appear in three shapes. First, as a poor woman, in ordinary clothes, to please Morose; then, in fine clothes, as a gallant—and in them was clearly the prettiest woman in the whole house; and lastly, as a man—and then likewise did appear the handsomest man in the house." When the play was concluded, and it was not the lad's humour to carouse with the men, the ladies would seize on him, in his theatrical dress, and, carrying him to Hyde Park in their coaches, be foolishly proud of the precious freight which they bore with them.

Kynaston was not invariably in such good luck. There was another handsome man, Sir Charles Sedley, whose style of dress the young actor aped; and his presumption was punished by a ruffian, hired by the baronet, who accosted Kynaston in St. James's Park, as "Sir Charles," and thrashed him in that character. The actor then mimicked Sir Charles on

the stage. A consequence was, that on the 30th of January 1669,[1] Kynaston was waylaid by three or four assailants, and so clubbed by them, that there was no play on the following evening; and the victim, mightily bruised, was forced to keep his bed. He did not recover in less than a week. On the 9th of February he reappeared, as the King of Tidore, in the "Island Princess," which "he do act very well," says Pepys, "after his beating by Sir Charles Sedley's appointment."

The boy who used to play Evadne, and now enacted the tyrants of the drama, retained a certain beauty to the last. "Even at past sixty," Cibber tells us, "his teeth were all sound, white, and even as one would wish to see in a reigning toast of twenty." Colley attributes the formal gravity of Kynaston's mien "to the stately step he had been so early confined to in a female decency." The same writer praises Kynaston's Leon, in "Rule a Wife and have a Wife," for its determined manliness and honest authority. In the heroic tyrants, his piercing eye, his quick, impetuous tone, and the fierce, lion-like majesty of his bearing and utterance, "gave the spectator a kind of trembling admiration."

When Cibber played Syphax, in "Cato," he did it as he thought Kynaston would have done, had he been alive to impersonate the character. Kynaston roared through the bombast of some of the dramatists with a laughable earnestness; but in Shakspeare's monarchs he was every inch a king—dignified

[1] Dr. Doran misreads Pepys, who gives the date as 31st January 1669.

and natural. The true majesty of his Henry IV. was so manifest, that when he whispered to Hotspur, "Send us your prisoners, or you'll hear of it," he conveyed, says Cibber, "a more terrible menace in it than the loudest intemperance of voice could swell to." Again, in the interview between the dying King and his son—the dignity, majestic grief, the paternal affection, the injured, kingly feeling, the pathos and the justness of the rebuke—were alike remarkable. The actor was equal to the task assigned him by the author—putting forth "that peculiar and becoming grace which the best writer cannot inspire into any actor that is not born with it."

Kynaston remained on the stage from 1659 to 1699. By this time his memory began to fail and his spirit to leave him. These imperfections, says the generous Colley, "were visibly not his own, but the effects of decaying nature." But Betterton's nature was not thus decaying; and his labour had been far greater than that of Kynaston, who created only a score of original characters, the best known of which are, Harcourt, in the "Country Wife;" Freeman, in the "Plain Dealer;" and Count Baldwin, in "Isabella, or the Fatal Marriage." His early practice in representing female characters affected his voice in some disagreeable way. "What makes you feel sick?" said Kynaston to Powell—suffering from a too riotous "last night." "How can I feel otherwise," asked Powell, "when I hear your voice?"

Edward Kynaston died in 1712, and lies buried in the churchyard of St. Paul's, Covent Garden. If not the greatest actor of his day, Kynaston was the greatest of the "boy-actresses." So exalted was his reputation, "that," says Downes, "it has since been disputable among the judicious, whether any woman that succeeded him so sensibly touched the audience as he."

In one respect he was more successful than Betterton, for he not only made a fortune, but kept what he had made, and left it to his only son. This son improved the bequest by his industry as a mercer in Covent Garden; and, probably remembering that he was well-descended from the Kynastons of Oteley, Salop, he sent his own son to college, and lived to see him ordained. This Reverend Mr. Kynaston purchased the impropriation of Aldgate: and, despite the vocations of his father and grandfather, but in consequence of the prudence and liberality of both, was willingly acknowledged by his Shropshire kinsmen.

Kynaston's contemporary, James Nokes, was as prudent and as fortunate as he; but James was not so well-descended. His father (and he himself for a time) was a city toyman—not so well to do, but he allowed his sons to go on the stage, where Robert was a respectable actor, and James, after a brief exercise of female characters, was admirable in his peculiar line. The toyman's son became a landholder, and made of his nephew a lord of the soil. Thus, even in those days of small salaries, players could build up fortunes; because the more prudent

among them nursed the little they could spare with care, and of that little made the very utmost.

Nokes was, to the last night of his career, famous for his impersonation of the Nurse in two plays; first, in that strange adaptation by Otway of "Romeo and Juliet" to a Roman tragedy, "Caius Marius;" and secondly, in Nevil Payne's fierce, yet not bombastic drama, "Fatal Jealousy." Of the portraits to be found in Cibber's gallery, one of the most perfect, drawn by Colley's hand, is that of James Nokes. Cibber attributes his general excellence to "a plain and palpable simplicity of nature, which was so utterly his own, that he was often as accountably diverting in his common speech as on the stage." His very conversation was an unctuous acting; and, in the truest sense of the word, he was "inimitable." Cibber himself, accomplished mimic as he was, confessedly failed in every attempt to reproduce the voice and manner of James Nokes, who identified himself with every part so easily, as to reap a vast amount of fame at the cost of hardly an hour's study. His range was through the entire realm of broad comedy, and Cibber thus photographs him for the entertainment of posterity.

"He scarce ever made his first entrance in a play but he was received with an involuntary applause, not of hands only, for those may be, and have often been, partially prostituted and bespoken, but by a general laughter, which the very sight of him provoked, and nature could not resist; yet the louder the laugh the graver was his look upon it; and sure

the ridiculous solemnity of his features were enough to have set a whole bench of bishops into a titter, could he have been honoured (may it be no offence to suppose it) with such grave and right reverend auditors. In the ludicrous distresses which by the laws of comedy folly is often involved in, he sunk into such a mixture of piteous pusillanimity, and a consternation so ruefully ridiculous and inconsolable, that when he had shook you to a fatigue of laughter, it became a moot point whether you ought not to have pitied him. When he debated any matter by himself, he would shut up his mouth with a dumb, studious pout, and roll his full eye into such a vacant amazement, such a palpable ignorance of what to think of it, that his silent perplexity (which would sometimes hold him several minutes) gave your imagination as full content as the most absurd thing he could say upon it."

This great comic actor was naturally of a grave and sober countenance; "but the moment he spoke, the settled seriousness of his features was utterly discharged, and a dry, drolling, or laughing levity took such full possession of him, that I can only refer the idea of him to your imagination." His clear and audible voice better fitted him for burlesque heroes, like Jupiter Ammon, than his middle stature; but the pompous inanity of his travestied pagan divinity, was as wonderful as the rich stolidity of his contentedly ignorant fools.

There was no actor whom the City so rejoiced in as Nokes; there was none whom the Court more

delighted to honour. In May 1670, Charles II., and troops of courtiers, went down to Dover to meet the Queen-mother, and took with them the Lincoln's-Inn-Fields comedians. When Henrietta Maria arrived, with her suite of French ladies and gentlemen, the latter attired, according to the prevailing fashion, in very short blue or scarlet laced coats, with broad sword belts, the English comedians played before the royal host and his guests the play founded on Molière's "Ecole des Femmes," and called "Sir Solomon." Nokes acted Sir Arthur Addel, in dressing for which part he was assisted by the Duke of Monmouth. In order that he might the better ape the French mode, the duke took off his own sword and belt, and buckled them to the actor's side. At his first entrance on the stage, King and Court broke into unextinguishable laughter, so admirably were the foreign guests caricatured; at which outrage on courtesy and hospitality, the guests, naturally enough, "were much chagrined," says Downes. Nokes retained the duke's sword and belt to his dying day, which fell in the course of the year 1692. He was the original representative of about forty characters, in plays which have long since disappeared from the stage. Charles II. was the first who recognised, on the occasion of his playing the part of Norfolk, in "Henry VIII.," the merit of Nokes as an actor.[1]

James Nokes left to his nephew something better

[1] I doubt whether *James* Nokes ever played the part. Genest evidently approves of Davies's suggestion that Robert Nokes was the actor of it.

than the sword and belt of the Duke of Monmouth, namely, a landed estate at Totteridge, near Barnet, of the value of £400 a year. Pepys may have kissed that nephew's mother, on the August day of 1665, when he fell into company near Rochester with a lady and gentleman riding singly, and differing as to the merits of a copy of verses, which Pepys, by his style of reading aloud, got the husband to confess that they were as excellent as the wife had pronounced them to be. "His name is Nokes," writes the diarist, "over against Bow Church. . . . We promised to meet, if ever we come both to London again, and at parting, I had a fair salute on horseback, in Rochester streets, of the lady."

Having thus seen the curtain fall upon the once "boy-actresses," I proceed to briefly notice the principal ladies in the respective companies of Killigrew and Davenant, commencing with those of the King's House, or Theatre Royal, under Killigrew's management, chiefly in Drury Lane. The first name of importance in this list is that of Mrs. Hughes, who, on the stage from 1663 to 1676, was more remarkable for her beauty than for her great ability. When the former, in 1668, subdued Prince Rupert, there was more jubilee at the Court of Charles II., at Tunbridge Wells, than if the philosophic Prince had fallen upon an invention that should benefit mankind. Rupert, whom the plumed gallants of Whitehall considered as a rude mechanic, left his laboratory, put aside his reserve, and wooed in due form the proudest, perhaps, of the actresses of her

day. Only in the May of that year Pepys had saluted her with a kiss, in the green-room of the King's House. She was then reputed to be the intimate friend and favourite of Sir Charles Sedley. "A mighty pretty woman," says Pepys, "and seems, but is not, modest." The Prince enshrined the frail beauty in that home of Sir Nicholas Crispe, at Hammersmith, which was subsequently occupied by Bubb Doddington, the Margravine of Anspach, and Queen Caroline of Brunswick. She well-nigh ruined her lover, at whose death there was little left beside a collection of jewels, worth £20,000, which were disposed of by lottery, in order to pay his debts. Mrs. Hughes was not unlike her own Mrs. Moneylove in "Tom Essence," a very good sort of person till temptation beset her. After his death she squandered much of the estate which Rupert had left to her, chiefly by gambling. Her contemporary, Nell Gwyn, purchased a celebrated pearl necklace belonging to the deceased Prince for £4520, a purchase which must have taken the appearance of an insult, in the eyes of Mrs. Hughes. The daughter of this union, Ruperta, who shared with her mother the modest estate bequeathed by the Prince, married General Emanuel Scrope Howe. One of the daughters of this marriage was the beautiful and reckless maid of honour to Caroline, Princess of Wales, whom the treachery of Nanty Lowther sent broken-hearted to the grave, in 1726. Through Ruperta, however, the blood of her parents is still continued in the family of Sir Edward Bromley.

Mrs. Knipp (or Knep) was a different being from Margaret Hughes. She was a pretty creature, with a sweet voice, a mad humour, and an ill-looking, moody, jealous husband, who vexed the soul and bruised the body of his sprightly, sweet-toned, and wayward wife. Excellent company she was found by Pepys and his friends, whatever her horse-jockey of a husband may have thought of her, or Mrs. Pepys of the philandering of her own husband with the minx, whom she did not hesitate to pronounce a "wench," and whom Pepys himself speaks of affectionately as a "jade" he was always glad to see. Abroad he walks with her in the New Exchange to look for pretty faces; and of the home of an actress, in 1666, we have a sketch in the record of a visit in November, "To Knipp's lodgings, whom I find not ready to go home with me; and there staid reading of Waller's verses, while she finished dressing, her husband being by. Her lodging very mean, and the condition she lives in; yet makes a show without doors, God bless us!"

Mrs. Knipp's characters embraced the rakish fine ladies, the rattling ladies'-maids, one or two tragic parts; and where singing was required, priestesses, nuns, and milkmaids. As one of the latter, Pepys was enchanted at her appearance, with her hair simply turned up in a knot, behind.

Her intelligence was very great, her simple style of dressing much commended; and she could deliver a prologue as deftly as she could either sing or dance, and with as much grace as she was wont to

throw into manifestations of touching grief or tenderness. She disappears from the bills in 1678, after a fourteen years' service; and there is no further record of the life of Mistress Knipp.

Anne and Rebecca Marshall are names which one can only reluctantly associate with that of Stephen Marshall the divine, who is said to have been their father. The Long Parliament frequently commanded the eloquent incumbent of Finchingfield, Essex, to preach before them. Cambridge University was as proud of him as a distinguished *alumnus*, as Huntingdonshire was of having him for a son. In affairs of religion he was the oracle of Parliament, and his advice was sought even in political difficulties. He was a mild and conscientious man, of whom Baxter remarked, that "if all the bishops had been of the spirit and temper of Usher, the Presbyterians of the temper of Mr. Marshall, and the Independents like Mr. Burroughs, the divisions of the Church would have been easily compromised." Stephen Marshall was a man who, in his practice, "preached his sermons o'er again;" and Firmin describes him as an "example to the believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in faith, and in purity." He died full of honours and understanding; and Westminster Abbey afforded him a grave, from which he was ruthlessly ejected at the Restoration. It is hardly possible to believe that such a saint was the father of the two beautiful actresses whom Nell Gwyn taunted with being the erring daughters of a "praying Presbyterian."

On the other hand, we learn from Sir Peter Leicester's *History of Cheshire*, that the *royalist*, Lord Gerard of Bromley, retained this staunch Presbyterian in his house as his chaplain. Further, we are told, that this chaplain married a certain illegitimate Elizabeth, whose father was a Dutton of Dutton, and that of this marriage came Anne and Rebecca. As Sir Peter was himself connected with both the Gerards and Duttons by marriage, he must be held as speaking with some authority in this matter.

Pepys says of Anne Marshall, that her voice was "not so sweet as Ianthe's," meaning Mrs. Betterton's. Rebecca had a beautiful hand, was very imposing on the stage, and even off of it was "mighty fine, pretty, and noble." She had the reputation of facilitating the intrigue which Lady Castlemaine kept up with Hart, the actor, to avenge herself on the King because of his admiration for Mrs. Davies. One of her finest parts was Dorothea, in the "Virgin Martyr;" and her Queen of Sicily (an "up-hill" part) to Nell Gwyn's Florimel, in Dryden's "Secret Love," was highly appreciated by the playgoing public.

With the exception of Mrs. Corey, the mimic, and pleasing little Mrs. Boutel, who realised a fortune, with her girlish voice and manner, and her supremely innocent and fascinating ways, justifying the intensity of love with which she inspired youthful heroes, the only other actress of the King's company worth mentioning is Nell Gwyn; but Nell was the crown of them all, winning hearts throughout her jubilant career, beginning in her early girlhood with that of

a link-boy, and ending in her womanhood with that of the king.

Nell Gwyn is claimed by the Herefordshire people. In Hereford city, a mean house in the rear of the Oak Inn is pointed out as the place of her birth. The gossips there little thought that a child so humbly born would be the mother of a line of dukes, or that her great grandson[1] should be the bishop of her native town, and occupy for forty years the episcopal palace in close proximity to the poor cottage in which the archest of hussies first saw the light.

But the claims of Pipe Lane, Hereford, are disputed by Coal Yard, Drury Lane, and also by Oxford, where Nell's father, James Gwyn, a "captain," according to some, a fruiterer according to others, died in prison. The captain with his wife Helena,[2] somewhile a resident in St. Martin's Lane, had two daughters, Nell and Rose. The latter married a Captain Capels, and, secondly, a Mr. Foster; little else is known of her, save that her less reputable sister left her a small legacy, and that she survived till the year 1697. Nelly was born early in 1650; and tradition states that she very early ran away from her country home to town, and studied for the stage by going every night to the play. I suspect Coal Yard was her first bower, that thence she issued to cry "fresh herrings!" and captivate the hearts of susceptible link-boys; and passed, from being hander of strong waters to the gentlemen who patronised Madame Ross's house, to taking her place in the pit,

[1] This should be grandson.

[2] Or Eleanor.

with her back to the orchestra, and selling oranges and pippins, with pertinent wit, gratis, to liberal fops who would buy the first and return the second with interest. As Rochester assures us, there was a "wondering pit" in presence of this smartest and most audacious of orange-girls. It was natural enough that she should attract the notice of the actors, that Lacy should give her instruction, and that from Charles Hart she should take that and all the love he could pay her. The latter two were spoken of in prologues, long after both were dead, as "those darlings of the stage."

Under the auspices of Charles Hart, Nelly made her first appearance at the (King's) theatre, in a serious part, Cydaria, in the "Indian Emperor." She was then not more than fifteen, though some say seventeen years of age. For tragedy she was unfitted: her stature was low, though her figure was graceful; and it was not till she assumed comic characters, stamped the smallest foot in England on the boards, and laughed with that peculiar laugh that, in the excess of it, her eyes almost disappeared, she fairly carried away the town, and enslaved the hearts of city and of court. She spoke prologues and epilogues with wonderful effect, danced to perfection, and in her peculiar but not extensive line was, perhaps, unequalled for the natural feeling which she put into the parts most suited to her. She was so fierce of repartee that no one ventured a second time to allude sneeringly to her antecedents. She was coarse, too, when the humour took her; could curse

pretty strongly if the house was not full, and was given, in common with the other ladies of the company, to loll about and talk loudly in the public boxes, when she was not engaged on the stage. She left both stage and boxes for a time, in 1667, to keep mad house at Epsom with the clever Lord Buckhurst—a man who for one youthful vice exhibited a thousand manly virtues. The story, that Lord Buckhurst separated from Mistress Gwyn for a money consideration and a title, can be disproved by the testimony of a character which all Peru could not have influenced, and of chronology, which sets the story at nought.

They who would read Buckhurst's true character, will find it in the eloquent and graceful dedication which Prior made of his poems to Buckhurst's son, Lionel. Like the first Sackville, of the line of the Earls of Dorset, he was himself a poet; and, "To all you ladies now on land," although not quite the impromptu it is said to have been, is an evidence how gracefully he could strike the lyre on the eve of a great battle. In short, Buckhurst, who took Nelly from the stage, and who found Prior in a coffee-shop and added him to literature, was a "man," brave, truthful, gay, honest, and universally beloved. He was the people's favourite; and Pope assures us, when Buckhurst had become Earl of Dorset, that he was "the grace of courts, the muses' pride."

After a year's absence,[1] Mistress Gwyn returned

[1] She was absent only about six weeks; Pepys chronicles her departure under July 13, 1667, and her return under August 22, 1667.

to the stage. In all nature, there was nothing better than she, in certain parts. Pepys never hoped to see anything like her in Florimel, with her changes of sex and costume. She was little, pretty, and witty; danced perfectly, and with such applause, that authors would fain have appropriated the approbation bestowed on her "jig," to the play in which it was introduced. A play, without Nell, was no play at all to Mr. Pepys. When, in 1667, she followed Buckhurst to Epsom, and flung up her parts and an honestly-earned salary for a poor £100 a-year, Pepys exclaims, "Poor girl! I pity her; but more the loss of her at the King's house." The Admiralty-clerk's admiration was confined to her merry characters; he speaks of her Emperor's Daughter, in the "Indian Emperor," as "a great and serious part, which she does most basely."

Her own party hailed her return; but she did not light upon a bed of roses. Lady Castlemaine was no longer her patroness—rather that and more of Nelly's old lover, Charles Hart, who flouted the ex-favourite of Buckhurst. That ex-favourite, however, bore with equal indifference the scorn of Charles Hart and the contempt of Charles Sackville; —she saw compensation for both, in the royal homage of Charles Stuart. Meanwhile, she continued to enchant the town in comedy, to "spoil" serious parts in Sir Robert Howard's mixed pieces, and yet to act with great success characters, in which natural emotion, bordering on insanity, was to be represented. Early in 1668, we find her among the

loose companions of King Charles; "and I am sorry for it," says Pepys, "and can hope for no good to the state, from having a Prince so devoted to his pleasure." The writers for the stage were of a like opinion. Howard wrote his "Duke of Lerma," as a vehicle of reproof to the King, who sat, a careless auditor, less troubled than Pepys himself, who expected that the play would be interrupted by royal authority. The last of her original characters was that of Almahide, in Dryden's "Conquest of Granada," the prologue to which she spoke in a straw hat as broad as a cart wheel, and thereby almost killed the King with laughter. In this piece, her old lover, Hart, played Almanzor; and his position with respect to King Boabdelin (Kynaston) and Almahide (Nelly) corresponds with that in which he stood towards King Charles and the actress. The passages reminding the audience of this complex circumstance threw the house into "convulsions."

From this time, Ellen Gwyn disappears from the stage. A similar surname appears in the play-bills from 1670 to 1682; but there is no ground for believing that the "Madam Gwyn" of the later period was the Mrs. Ellen of the earlier, poorer, and merrier times. Nelly's first son, Charles Beauclerc, was born in her house, in Lincoln's Inn Fields, in May 1670; her second, in the following year, at her house in Pall Mall, the garden terrace of which overlooked the then green walk in the park, from which Evelyn saw, with shame, the King talking

with the impudent "comedian." This younger son, James, died at Paris, 1680. The elder had Otway for a tutor. In his sixth year he was created Earl of Burford, and in his fourteenth was created a duke. His mother had addressed him, in the King's hearing, by an epithet referring to his illegitimacy, on the plea that she did not know by what title to call him. Charles made him an earl. Accident of death raised him to a dukedom. Harry Jermyn, Earl of St. Albans, of whom report made the second husband of Henrietta Maria, had just died. Blind as he had been, he had played cards to the last—some one sitting near him to tell him the points. At an age approaching to ninety years, he had passed away. Charles gave the name of St. Albans, with the title of duke, to Nell Gwyn's eldest son, adding thereto the registrarship of the High Court of Chancery, and the office (rendered hereditary) of Master Falconer of England. The present and tenth Duke of St. Albans is the lineal descendant of Charles Stuart and Ellen Gwyn.

The King had demurred to a request to settle £500 a year on this lady, and yet within four years she is known to have exacted from him above £60,000. Subsequently, £6000, annually, were tossed to her from the Excise,—that hardest taxation of the poor,—and £3000 more were added for the expenses of each son. She blazed publicly at Whitehall, with diamonds out-flashing those usually worn, as Evelyn has it, "by the like cattle." At Burford House, Windsor, her gorgeous country

residence, she could gaily lose £1400[1] in one night at basset, and purchase diamond necklaces the next day, at fabulous prices. Negligent dresser as she was, she always looked fascinating; and fascinating as she was, she had a ready fierceness and a bitter sarcasm at hand, when other royal favourites, or sons of favourites, assailed or sneered at her. With the King and his brother she bandied jokes as freely as De Pompadour or Du Barry with Louis XV. By impulse, she could be charitable; but by neglecting the claims of her own creditors she could be cruel. Charles alluded to her extravagance when, on his deathbed, he recommended those shameless women, Cleveland and Portsmouth, to his brother's kindness, and hoped he would "not let Nelly starve." An apocryphal story attributes the founding of Chelsea Hospital to Nelly's tenderness for a poor old wounded soldier who had been cheated of his pay. The dedications to her of books by such people as Aphra Behn and Duffet are blasphemous in their expressions, making of her, as they do, a sort of divine essence, and becoming satirical by their exaggerated and disgusting eulogy. For such a person, the pure and pious Bishop Ken was once called upon to yield up an apartment in which he lodged, and the peerage had a narrow escape of having her foisted upon it as Countess of Greenwich. This clever actress died in November 1687 of a fit of apoplexy, by which she had been stricken in the

[1] Peter Cunningham says, "1400 guineas, or £5000 at least of our present money."

previous March. She was then in her thirty-eighth year. She had been endowed like a princess, but she left debts, and died just in time to allow James to discharge them out of the public purse. Finally, she was carried to old St. Martin's-in-the-Fields to be buried, and Tennison preached her funeral sermon. When this was subsequently made the ground of exposing him to the reproof of Queen Mary, she remarked, that the good doctor, no doubt, had said nothing but what the facts authorised.

In the time of Nelly's most brilliant fortunes, the people who laughed at her wit and impudence publicly contemned her. In February 1680 she visited the Duke's Theatre, in Lincoln's Inn Fields, on which occasion a person in the pit called her loudly by a name which, to do her justice, she never repudiated. The affront, which she herself could laugh at, was taken up by William Herbert, brother of Philip, Earl of Pembroke, who had married the younger sister of another of the King's favourites, Henrietta de Querouaille. The audience took part, some with the assailant, others with the champion of Nelly. Many swords were drawn, the sorrows of the "Orphan" were suspended, there was a hubbub in the house, and more scratches given than blood spilt. That Nelly found a knight in Thomas Herbert only proves that a hot-headed young gentleman may become a very sage as years grow upon him. This Thomas, when Earl of Pembroke, was "first plenipotentiary" at the making of the treaty of Ryswick, and Chief Commissioner

in establishing the Union of England and Scotland. His excellent taste and liberality laid the foundations of the collection of antiques which yet attracts visitors to Wilton. But love for leading play-house factions did not die out in his family. Four and forty years after he had drawn sword for the reputation of Nell Gwyn, his third Countess, Mary, sister of Viscount Howe, headed the Cuzzoni party at the Opera-house against the Faustina faction, led by the Countess of Burlington and Lady Delawar. Whenever Faustina opened her mouth to sing, Lady Pembroke and her friends hissed the singer heartily; and as soon as Cuzzoni made a similar attempt, Lady Burlington and her followers shrieked her into silence. Lord Pembroke sat by, thinking, perhaps, of the young days when he was the champion of Nell Gwyn, or of Margaret Symcott, if an old tradition be true that such was Nelly's real name.

Of the ladies who played at the Duke's House, under Davenant, the principal were Mrs. Davenport, Mrs. Davies, Mrs. Gibbs, Mrs. Holden, Mrs. Jennings, Mrs. Long, and Mrs. Norris. Chief among these were Mistresses Davenport, Davies, Saunderson, and Long. Mrs. Davenport is remembered as the Roxalana of Davenant's "Siege of Rhodes," which she played so well that Pepys could not forget her in either of her successors, Mrs. Betterton or Mrs. Norton. She is still better remembered in connection with a story of which she is the heroine, although that character in it has been ascribed to others.

Aubrey de Vere, the twentieth Earl of Oxford, was the last of his house who held that title, but the one who held it the longest, namely, seventy years, from 1632 to 1702. Aubrey de Vere despised the old maxim, "Noblesse oblige." He lived a roystering life, kept a roystering house, and was addicted to hard drinking, rough words, and unseemly brawling and sword-slashing in his cups. The young earl made love, after the fashion of the day and the man, to Mrs. Davenport, but he might as well have made love to Diana; and it was not till he proposed marriage that the actress condescended to listen to his suit. The lovers were privately married, and the lady was, in the words of old Downes, "crept the stage." The honeymoon, however, was speedily obscured; Lord Oxford grew indifferent and brutal. When the lady talked of her rights, he informed her that she was not Countess of Oxford at all. The apparent reverend gentleman who had performed the ceremony of marriage was a trumpeter, who served under this very noble Lord in the King's own regiment of cavalry. The forlorn fair one, after threatening suicide, sought out the King, fell at his feet, and demanded justice. The award was made in the shape of an annuity of £300 a year, with which "Lord Oxford's Miss," as Evelyn calls her, seems to have been satisfied and consoled; for Pepys, soon after, being at the play, "saw the old Roxalana in the chief box, in a velvet gown, as the fashion is, and very handsome, at which I was glad."

As for Miss Mary Davies, it is uncertain whether

she was the daughter of a Wiltshire blacksmith, or the less legitimate offspring of Thomas Howard, the first Earl of Berkshire, or of the earl's son—not the poet, but the colonel. However this may be, Mary Davies was early on the stage, where she danced well, played moderately ill, announced the next afternoon's performance with grace, and won an infamous distinction at the King's hands, by her inimitable singing of the old song, "My lodging is on the cold ground." Then there was the publicly furnishing of a house for her, and the presentation of a ring worth £600, and much scandal to good men and honest women. Thereupon Miss Davies grew an "impertinent slut," and my Lady Castlemaine waxed melancholy, and meditated mischief against her royal and fickle lover. The patient Queen herself was moved to anger by the new position of Miss Davies, and when the latter appeared in a play at Whitehall, in which she was about to dance, her Majesty rose and left the house. But neither the offended dignity of the Queen, nor Lady Castlemaine "looking fire," nor the bad practical jokes of Nell Gwyn, could loose the King from the temporary enchantment to which he surrendered himself. Their daughter was that Mary Tudor, who married the second Earl of Derwentwater, whose son, the third earl, was the gallant young fellow who lost his head for aid afforded to his cousin, the first Pretender, in 1715. Before his death, a request was made to the Duke of Richmond, son of Charles II., by Madlle. de Querouaille, to present a memorial

to the Lords in order to save the young earl's life. The Duke presented the memorial, but he added his earnest hope that their lordships would reject the prayer of it! In such wise did the illegitimate Stuarts play brother to each other! Through the marriage of the daughter of Lord Derwentwater with the eighth Lord Petre, the blood of the Stuart and of Moll Davies still runs in their lineal descendant, the present and twelfth lord.

Happy are the women who have no histories! Such is the case with Miss Saunderson, better known to us as Mrs. Betterton. For about thirty years she played the chief female characters, especially in Shakspeare's plays, with great success. She created as many new parts as she played years; but they were in old-world pieces, which have been long forgotten. In the home which she kept with her husband, charity, hospitality, and dignity abided. So unexceptionable was Mrs. Betterton's character, that when Crowne's "Calisto" was to be played at court in 1674, she was chosen to be instructress to the Lady Mary and the Lady Anne. These princesses derived from Mrs. Betterton's lessons the accomplishment for which both were distinguished when queens, of pronouncing speeches from the throne in a distinct and clear voice, with sweetness of intonation, and grace of enunciation. Mrs. Betterton subsequently instructed the Princess Anne in the part of Semandra, and her husband did the like office for the young noblemen who also played in Lee's rattling tragedy of "Mithridates." Two

individuals, better qualified by their professional skill and their moral character, to instruct the young princesses and courtiers, and to exercise over them a wholesome authority, could not then have been found on or off the stage. After Betterton's death, Queen Anne settled on her old teacher of elocution a pension of £500 a year.

Of the remainder of the actresses who first joined Davenant, there is nothing recorded, except their greater or less efficiency. Of Mrs. Holden, Betterton's kinswoman, the only incident that I can recall to mind is, that once, by the accidental mispronunciation of a word, when playing in "Romeo and Juliet," and giving it "a vehement action, it put the house into such a laughter, that London Bridge at low water was silence to it!" Under its echoes let us pass to the "gentlemen of the King's Company."

THE FORTUNE THEATRE.

CHAPTER IV.

THE GENTLEMEN OF THE KING'S COMPANY.

Of the King's Company, under Killigrew—Hart, Burt, and Clun have already been noticed as players who commenced their career by acting female parts. Of the other early members of this troop, the first names of importance are those of Lacy, and little Major Mohun, the low comedian, and the high tragedian. Of those who precede them alphabetically, but little remains on record. We only know of Theophilus Bird, that he broke his leg when dancing in Suckling's "Aglaura," probably when the poet changed his tragedy, in which the characters

killed each other, into a sort of comedy, in which they all survived. Cartwright, on the other hand, has left a lasting memorial. If you would see how the kind old fellow looked, go down to Dulwich College—that grand institution, for which actors have done so much and which has done so little for actors—and gaze on his portrait there. It is the picture of a man who bequeathed his books, pictures, and furniture to the College which Alleyn, another actor, had founded. In early life, Cartwright had been a bookseller, at the corner of Turnstile, Holborn; and in his second vocation his great character was Falstaff.

Lacy was a great Falstaff, too; and his portrait, a triple one, painted by Wright and etched by Hopkins, one of the Princess Elizabeth's pages, is familiarly known to Hampton Court visitors. Lacy had been first a dancing-master, then a lieutenant in the army, before he tried the stage. In his day he had no equal; and his admirers denied that the day to come would ever see his equal. Lacy was handsome, both in shape and feature, and is to be remembered as the original performer of Teague, in the "Committee;" a play of Howard's, subsequently cut down to the farce of "The Honest Thieves." And eight years later (1671), taught by Buckingham, and mimicking Dryden, he startled the town with that immortal Bayes, in the "Rehearsal;" a part so full of happy opportunities that it was coveted or essayed for many years, not only by every great actor, whatever his line, but by many an actress, too; and last of all by William Farren, in 1819.

There was nothing within the bounds of comedy that Lacy could not act well. Evelyn styles him "Roscius." Frenchman, or Scot, or Irishman, fine gentleman or fool, rogue or honest simpleton, Tartuffe or Drench, old man or loquacious woman,—in all, Lacy was the delight of the town for about a score of years. The King ejected the best players from parts, considered almost as their property, and assigned them to Lacy. His wardrobe was a spectacle of itself, and gentlemen of leisure and curiosity went to see it. He took a positive enjoyment in parts which enabled him to rail at the rascalities of courtiers. Sometimes this Aristophanic licence went too far. In Howard's "Silent Woman," the sarcasms reached the King, and moved his majesty to wrath, and to locking up Lacy himself in the Porter's Lodge. After a few days' detention, he was released; whereupon Howard, meeting him behind the scenes, congratulated him. Lacy, still ill in temper, abused the poet for the nonsense he had put into the part of Captain Otter, which was the cause of all the mischief. Lacy further told Howard he was "more a fool than a poet." Thereat the honourable Edward, raising his glove, smote Lacy smartly with it over the face. Jack Lacy retaliated by lifting his cane and letting it descend quite as smartly on the pate of a man who was cousin to an earl. Ordinary men marvelled that the honourable Edward did not run Jack through the body. On the contrary, without laying hand to hilt, Howard hastened to the King, lodged his complaint, and the

house was thereupon ordered to be closed. Thus, many starved for the indiscretion of one; but the gentry rejoiced at the silencing of the company, as those clever fellows and their fair mates were growing, as that gentry thought, "too insolent."

Lacy, soon after, was said to be dying, and altogether so ill-disposed, as to have refused ghostly advice at the hands of "a bishop, an old acquaintance of his," says Pepys, "who went to see him." Who could this bishop have been who was the old acquaintance of the ex-dancing-master and lieutenant? Herbert Croft, or Seth Ward?—or, Isaac Barrow, of Sodor-and-Man, whose father, the mercer, had lived near the father of Betterton? But, whoever he may have been, the King's favour restored the actor to health; and he remained Charles's favourite comedian till his death, in 1681.

When Lacy's posthumous comedy, "Sir Hercules Buffoon," was produced in 1684, the man with the longest and crookedest nose, and the most wayward wit in England—Tom Durfey—furnished the prologue. In that piece he designated Lacy as the standard of true comedy. If the play does not take, said lively Tom—

> "all that we can say on't
> Is, we've his fiddle, but not his hands to play on't!"

Genest, a critic not very hard to please, says that Lacy's friends should have "buried his fiddle with him."

Michael Mohun is the pleasantest and, perhaps, the greatest name on the roll of the King's Com-

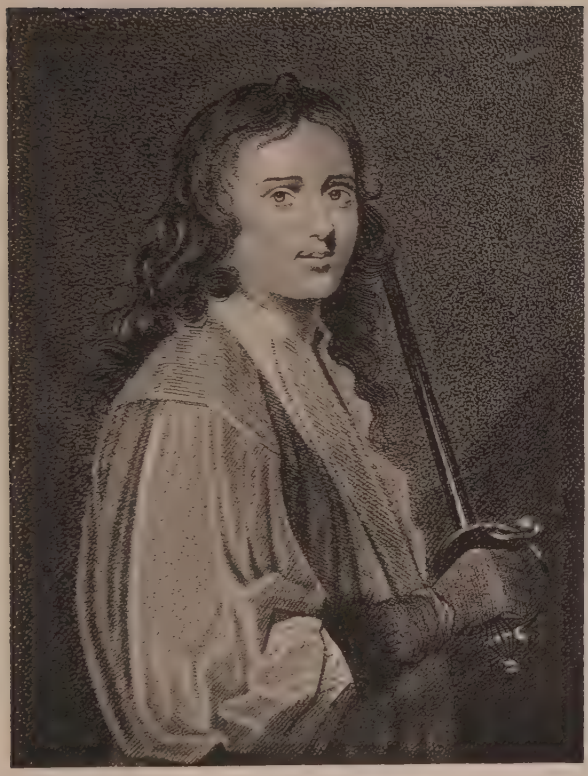
pany. When the players offended the King, Mohun was the peacemaker.

One cannot look on Mohun's portrait, at Knowle, without a certain mingling of pleasure and respect. That long-haired young fellow wears so frank an aspect, and the hand rests on the sword so delicately yet so firmly! He is the very man who might "rage like Cethegus, or like Cassius die." Lee could never willingly write a play without a part for Mohun, who, with Hart, was accounted among the good actors that procured profitable "third days" for authors. No Maximin could defy the gods as he did; and there has been no franker Clytus since the day he originally represented the character in "Alexander the Great." In some parts he contested the palm with Betterton, whose versatility he rivalled, creating one year Abdelmelich, in another Dapperwit, in a third Pinchwife, and then a succession of classical heroes and modern rakes or simpletons. Such an actor had many imitators, but, in his peculiar line, few could rival a man who was said to speak as Shakspeare wrote, and whom nature had formed for a nation's delight. The author of the Epilogue to "Love in the Dark" (that bustling piece of Sir Francis Fane's, from the Scrutinio,[1] in which, played by Lacy, Mrs. Centlivre derived her Marplot), illustrates the success of Mohun's imitators by an allusion to the gout from which he suffered:

> "Those Blades indeed, but cripples in their art,—
> Mimic his foot, but not his speaking part."

Of his modesty, I know no better trait than what

[1] Should be Intrigo, which Lacy really played.



passed when Nat. Lee had read to him a part which Mohun was to fill in one of Lee's tragedies. The Major put aside the manuscript, in a sort of despair—"Unless I could play the character as beautifully as you read it," said he, "it were vain to try it at all!"

Such is the brief record of a great actor, one who before our civil jars was a young player, during the civil wars was a good soldier, and in the last years of Charles II. was an old and a great actor still. Of the other original members of the Theatre Royal, there is not much to be said. Wintershell, who died in 1679, merits, however, a word. He was distinguished, whether wearing the sock or the buskin, majestic in loftily-toned kings, and absurd in sillily-amorous knights. Downes has praised him as superior to Nokes, in at least one part, and his Slender has won eulogy from so stern a critic as Dennis.

Among the men who subsequently joined the Theatre Royal, there were some good actors, and a few great rogues. Of these, the best actor and the greatest rogue was Cardell Goodman, or *Scum* Goodman, as he was designated by his enemies. His career on the stage lasted from 1677, as Polyperchon, in Lee's "Rival Queens," to 1688. His most popular parts were Julius Cæsar and Alexander. He came to the theatre hot from a fray at Cambridge University, whence he had been expelled for cutting and slashing the portrait of that exemplary Chancellor, the Duke of Monmouth.

This rogue's salary must have been small, for he and Griffin shared the same bed in their modest lodging,

and having but one shirt between them, wore it each in his turn. The only dissension which ever occurred between them was caused by Goodman, who, having to pay a visit to a lady, clapped on the shirt when it was clean, and Griffin's day for wearing it!

For restricted means, however, every gentleman of spirit, in those days, had a resource, if he chose to avail himself of it. The resource was the road, and Cardell Goodman took to it with alacrity. But he came to grief, and found himself with gyves on in Newgate; yet he escaped the cart, the rope, and Tyburn. King James gave "his Majesty's servant" his life, and Cardell returned to the stage—a hero.

A middle-aged duchess, fond of heroes, adopted him as a lover, and Cardell Goodman had fine quarters, rich feeding, and a dainty wardrobe, all at the cost of his mistress, the ex-favourite of a king, Barbara, the Duchess of Cleveland. Scum Goodman was proud of his splendid degradation, and paid such homage to "*my* duchess," as the impudent fellow called her, that when he expected her presence in the theatre, he would not go on the stage, though king and queen were kept waiting, till he heard that "his duchess" was in the house. For her he played the mad scene in Alexander with double vigour, and cared for no other applause so long as her Grace's fan signalled approbation.

Scum might have had a rare, if a rascally, life, had he been discreet; but he was fool as well as knave. A couple of the Duchess's children in the Duchess's house annoyed him, and Scum suborned a villainous

Italian quack to dispose of them by poison. A discovery, before the attempt was actually made, brought Scum to trial for a misdemeanour. He had the luck of his own father, the devil, that he was not tried for murder. As it was, a heavy fine crippled him for life. He seems, however, to have hung about the stage after he withdrew from it as an actor. He looked in at rehearsals, and seeing a likely lad, named Cibber, going through the little part of the Chaplain, in the "Orphan," one spring morning of 1690, Scum loudly wished he might be—what he very much deserved to be, if the young fellow did not turn out a good actor. Colley was so delighted with the earnest criticism, that the tears flowed to his eyes. At least, he says so.

King James having saved Cardell's neck, Goodman, out of pure gratitude, perhaps, became a Tory, and something more, when William sat in the seat of his father-in-law. After Queen Mary's death, Scum was in the Fenwick and Charnock plot to kill the King. When the plot was discovered, Scum was ready to peach. As Fenwick's life was thought by his friends to be safe if Goodman could be bought off and got out of the way, the rogue was looked for, at the *Fleece*, in Covent Garden, famous for homicides, and at the robbers' and the revellers' den, the *Dog*, in Drury Lane. Fenwick's agent, O'Bryan, erst soldier and highwayman, now a Jacobite agent, found Scum at the *Dog*, and would then and there have cut his throat, had not Scum consented to the pleasant alternative of accepting £500 a year, and a residence abroad. This

to a man who was the first forger of bank-notes! Scum suddenly disappeared, and Lord Manchester, our Ambassador in Paris, inquired after him in vain. It is impossible to say whether the rogue died by an avenging hand, or starvation.

We are better acquainted with the fate of the last of Scum's fair favourites, the pretty Mrs. Price of Drury Lane. This Ariadne was not disconsolate for her Theseus. She married "Charles, Lord Banbury," who was *not* Lord Banbury, for the House of Peers denied his claim to the title; and he was not Mrs. Price's husband, as he was already married to a living lady, Mrs. Lester. Of this confusion in social arrangements the world made small account, although the law did pronounce in favour of Mrs. Lester, without troubling itself to punish "my lord." The Judges pronounced for the latter lady, solely on the ground that she had had children, and the actress none.

Joseph Haines! "Joe" with his familiars, "Count Haines" with those who affected great respect, was a rogue in his way,—a merry rogue, a ready wit, and an admirable low comedian, from 1672 to 1701. We first hear of him as a quickwitted lad at a school in St. Martin's-in-the-Fields, whence he was sent, through the liberality of some gentlemen who had remarked his talents, to Queen's College, Oxford. There Haines met with Williamson, the Sir Joseph of after days, distinguished alike for his scholarship, his abilities as a statesman, the important offices he held, and the liberality with which he dispensed the fortune which he honourably acquired.

Williamson chose Haines for a friend, and made him his Latin secretary when Williamson was appointed Secretary of State. If Haines could have kept official and state secrets, his own fortune would now have been founded; but Joe gossiped in joyous companies, and in taverns revealed the mysteries of diplomacy. Williamson parted with his indiscreet "servant," but sent him to recommence fortune-making at Cambridge. Here, again, his waywardness ruined him for a professor. A strolling company at Stourbridge Fair seduced him from the groves of Academus,[1] and in a short time this foolish and clever fellow, light of head, of heart, and of principle, was the delight of the Drury Lane audiences, and the favoured guest in the noblest society where mirth, humour, and dashing impudence were welcome.

In 1673, his Sparkish, in the "Country Wife"—his original character—was accepted as the type of the airy gentleman of the day. His acting on, and his jokes off, the stage were the themes in all coteries and coffee-houses. He was a great practical jester, and once engaged a simple-minded clergyman as "Chaplain to the Theatre Royal," and sent him behind the scenes, ringing a bell, and calling the players to prayers! When Romanism was looking up, under James II., Haines had the impudence to announce to the convert Sunderland, — unworthy son of Waller's Sacharissa,—his adoption of the King's religion, being moved thereto by the Virgin,

[1] Other accounts say that he commenced his theatrical life early, at the "Nursery."

who had appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joe, arise!" This was too much even for Sunderland, who drily observed that "she would have said 'Joseph,' if only out of respect for her husband!"

The rogue showed the value of a "profession," which gave rise to as many pamphlets as Dryden's, by subsequently recanting,—not in the church, but on the stage; he the while covered with a sheet, holding a taper, and delivering some stupid rhymes, —to the very dullest of which he had the art of giving wonderful expression by his accent, emphasis, modulation, and felicity of application. The audience that could bear this recantation-prologue could easily pardon the speaker, who would have caused even greater errors to have been pardoned, were it only for his wonderful impersonation of Captain Bluff (1693) in Congreve's "Old Bachelor." The self-complaisant way in which he used to utter "Hannibal was a very pretty fellow in his day," was universally imitated, and has made the phrase itself proverbial. His Roger, in "Æsop," was another of his successes, the bright roll of which was crowned by his lively, impudent, irresistible Tom Errand, in Farquhar's "Constant Couple,"—that most triumphant comedy of a whole century.

The great fault of Haines lay in the liberties which he took with the business of the stage. He cared less to identify himself with the characters he represented than, through them, to keep up a communication with the spectators. When Hart, then manager, cast Joe for the simple part of a

Senator, in "Catiline," in which Hart played the hero, Joe, in disgust at his *rôle*, spoiled Hart's best point, by sitting behind him, absurdly attired, with pot and pipe in hand, and making grimaces at the grave actor of Catiline; which kept the house in a roar of laughter. Hart could not be provoked to forget his position, and depart from his character; but as soon as he made his *exit*, he sent Joe his dismissal.

Joe Haines then alternated between the stage and the houses of his patrons. "Vivitur ingenio"—the stage-motto, was also his own, and he seems to have added to his means by acting the jester's part in noble circles. He was, however, no mere "fool." Scholars might respect a "classic," like Haines, and travelling lords gladly hire as a companion, a witty fellow, who knew two or three living languages as familiarly as he did his own. With an English peer he once visited Paris, where Joe is said to have got imprisoned for debt, incurred in the character, assumed by him, of an English lord. After his release, he returned to England, self-invested with the dignity of "Count," a title not respected by a couple of bailiffs, who arrested Joseph, on Holborn Hill, for a little matter of £20.

"Here comes the carriage of my cousin, the Bishop of Ely," said the unblushing knave; "let me speak to him; I am sure he will satisfy you in this matter."

Consent was given, and Haines, putting his head in at the carriage-door, hastily informed the good Simon Patrick that "here were two Romanists in-

clined to become Protestants, but with yet some scruples of conscience."

"My friends," said the eager prelate to them, "if you will presently come to my house, I will satisfy you in this matter!" The scrupulous gentlemen were well content; but when an explanation ensued, the vexed bishop paid the money out of very shame, and Joe and the bailiffs spread the story. They who remembered how Haines played Lord Plausible, in the "Plain Dealer," were not at all surprised at his deceiving a bishop and a brace of bailiffs.

Sometimes his wit was of a nicer quality. When Jeremy Collier's book against the stage was occupying the public mind, a critic expressed his surprise, seeing that the stage was a mender of morals. "True," answered Joe, "but Collier is a mender of morals, too; and two of a trade, you know, never agree!"

Haines was the best comic actor, in his peculiar line of comedy, during nearly thirty years that he was one of "their majesties' servants." He died at his house in Hart Street, Covent Garden, then a fashionable locality, on the 4th of April 1701, and was buried in the gloomy churchyard of the parish, which has nothing to render it bright but the memory of the poets, artists, and actors whose bodies are there buried in peace.

Let us now consider the men in Davenant's, or the Duke's Company, who acted occasionally in Dorset Gardens, but mostly in Portugal Row, Lincoln's Inn Fields. Of these, the greatest actor was good Thomas Betterton,—and his merits claim a chapter to himself.

THEATRE ROYAL, PORTUGAL STREET, LINCOLN'S INN FIELDS.

CHAPTER V.

THOMAS BETTERTON.

The diaries, biographies, journals, and traditions of the time will enable us, with some little aid from the imagination, not only to see the actor, but the social aspects amid which he moved. By aid of these, I find that, on a December night, 1661, there is a crowded house at the theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields. The play is "Hamlet," with young Mr. Betterton, who has been two years on the stage, in the part of the Dane. The Ophelia is the real object of the young fellow's love, charming Mistress Saunderson. Old ladies and gentlemen, repairing in capacious coaches

to this representation, remind one another of the lumbering and crushing of carriages about the old playhouse in the Blackfriars, causing noisy tumults which drew indignant appeals from the Puritan housekeepers, whose privacy was sadly disturbed. But what was the tumult there to the scene on the south side of the "Fields," when "Hamlet," with Betterton, as now, was offered to the public! The Jehus contend for place with the eagerness of ancient Britons in a battle of chariots. And see, the mob about the pit-doors have just caught a bailiff attempting to arrest an honest playgoer. They fasten the official up in a tub, and roll the trembling wretch all "round the square." They finish by hurling him against a carriage, which sweeps from a neighbouring street at full gallop. Down come the horses over the barrelled bailiff, with sounds of hideous ruin; and the young lady lying back in the coach is screaming like mad. This lady is the dishonest daughter of brave, honest, and luckless Viscount Grandison. As yet she is only Mrs. Palmer; next year she will be Countess of Castlemaine.

At length the audience are all safely housed and eager. Indifferent enough, however, they are during the opening scenes. The fine gentlemen laugh loudly and comb their periwigs in the "best rooms." The fops stand erect in the boxes to show how folly looks in clean linen; and the orange nymphs, with their costly entertainment of fruit from Seville, giggle and chatter, as they stand on the benches below with old and young admirers, proud of being recognised in the boxes.

The whole court of Denmark is before them; but not till the words, "'Tis not alone my inky cloak, good mother," fall from the lips of Betterton, is the general ear charmed, or the general tongue arrested. Then, indeed, the vainest fops and pertest orange girls look round and listen too. The voice is so low, and sad, and sweet; the modulation so tender, the dignity so natural, the grace so consummate, that all yield themselves silently to the delicious enchantment. "It's beyond imagination," whispers Mr. Pepys to his neighbour, who only answers with a long and low drawn "*Hush!*"

I can never look on Kneller's masterly portrait of this great player, without envying those who had the good fortune to see the original, especially in Hamlet. How grand the head, how lofty the brow, what eloquence and fire in the eyes, how firm the mouth, how manly the sum of all! How is the whole audience subdued almost to tears, at the mingled love and awe which he displays in presence of the spirit of his father! Some idea of Betterton's acting in this scene may be derived from Cibber's description of it, and from that I come to the conclusion, that Betterton fulfilled all that Overbury laid down with regard to what best graced an actor. "Whatsoever is commendable to the grave orator, is most exquisitely perfect in him; for by a full and significant action of body he charms our attention. Sit in a full theatre, and you will think you see so many lines drawn from the circumference of so many ears, while the actor is the centre." This was especially the case with Betterton;

and now, as Hamlet's first soliloquy closes, and the charmed but silent audience "feel music's pulse in all their arteries," Mr. Pepys almost too loudly exclaims in his ecstasy, "It's the best acted part ever done by man." And the audience think so, too; there is a hurricane of applause; after which the fine gentlemen renew their prattle with the fine ladies, and the orange girls beset the Sir Foplings, and this universal trifling is felt as a relief after the general emotion.

Meanwhile, a critic objects that young Mr. Betterton is not "original," and intimates that his Hamlet is played by tradition come down through Davenant, who had seen the character acted by Taylor, and had taught the boy to enact the Prince after the fashion set by the man who was said to have been instructed by Shakspeare himself; amid which Mr. Pepys remarks, "I only know that Mr. Betterton is the best actor in the world."

As Sir Thomas Overbury remarked of a great player, his voice was never lower than the prompter's nor higher than the foil and target. But let us be silent, here comes the gentle Ophelia. The audience generally took an interest in this lady, and the royal Dane, for there was not one in the house who was ignorant of the love-passages there had been between them, or of the coming marriage by which they were to receive additional warrant. Mistress Saunderson was a lady worthy of all the homage here implied. There was mind in her acting; and she not only possessed personal beauty, but also the richer beauty of a virtuous life. They were a well-matched couple

on and off the stage; and their mutual affection was based on a mutual respect and esteem. People thought of them together, as inseparable, and young ladies wondered how Mr. Betterton could play Mercutio, and leave Mistress Saunderson as Juliet, to be adored by the not ineffective Mr. Harris as Romeo! The whole house, as long as the incomparable pair were on the stage, were in a dream of delight. Their grace, perfection, good looks, the love they had so cunningly simulated, and that which they were known to mutually entertain, formed the theme of all tongues. In its discussion, the retiring audience forgot the disinterring of the regicides, and the number of men killed the other day on Tower Hill, servants of the French and Spanish ambassadors, in a bloody struggle for precedency, which was ultimately won by the Don!

Fifty years after these early triumphs, an aged couple resided in one of the best houses in Russell Street, Covent Garden,—the walls of which were covered with pictures, prints, and drawings, selected with taste and judgment. They were still a handsome pair. The venerable lady, indeed, looks pale and somewhat saddened. The gleam of April sunshine which penetrates the apartment cannot win her from the fire. She is Mrs. Betterton, and ever and anon she looks with a sort of proud sorrow on her aged husband. His fortune, nobly earned, has been diminished by "speculation," but the means whereby he achieved it are his still, and Thomas Betterton, in the latter years of Queen Anne, is the

chief glory of the stage, even as he was in the first year of King Charles. The lofty column, however, is a little shaken. It is not a ruin, but is beautiful in its decay. Yet that it should decay at all is a source of so much tender anxiety to the actor's wife, that her senses suffer disturbance, and there may be seen in her features something of the distraught Ophelia of half a century ago.

It is the 13th of April, 1710—his benefit night; and the tears are in the lady's eyes, and a painful sort of smile on her trembling lips, for Betterton kisses her as he goes forth that afternoon to take leave, as it proved, of the stage for ever. He is in such pain from gout that he can scarcely walk to his carriage, and how is he to enact the noble and fiery Melantius in that ill-named drama of horror, "The Maid's Tragedy"? Hoping for the best, the old player is conveyed to the theatre, built by Sir John Vanbrugh, in the Haymarket, the site of which is now occupied by the "Opera-house." Through the stage-door he is carried in loving arms to his dressing-room. At the end of an hour Wilks is there, and Pinkethman, and Mrs. Barry, all dressed for their parts, and agreeably disappointed to find the Melantius of the night robed, armoured, and besworded, with one foot in a buskin and the other in a slipper. To enable him even to wear the latter, he had first thrust his inflamed foot into water; but stout as he seemed, trying his strength to and fro in the room, the hand of Death was at that moment descending on the grandest of English actors.

The house rose to receive him who had delighted themselves, their sires, and their grandsires. The audience were packed "like Norfolk biffins." The edifice itself was only five years old, and when it was a-building, people laughed at the folly which reared a new theatre in the country, instead of in London; —for in 1705 all beyond the rural Haymarket was open field, straight away westward and northward. That such a house could ever be filled was set down as an impossibility; but the achievement was accomplished on this eventful benefit night; when the popular favourite was about to utter his last words, and to belong thenceforward only to the history of the stage he had adorned.

There was a shout which shook him, as Lysippus uttered the words "Noble Melantius," which heralded his coming. Every word which could be applied to himself was marked by a storm of applause, and when Melantius said of Amintor—

> "His youth did promise much, and his ripe years
> Will see it all performed,"

a murmuring comment ran round the house, that this had been effected by Betterton himself. Again, when he bids Amintor "hear thy friend, who has more years than thou," there were probably few who did not wish that Betterton were as young as Wilks: but when he subsequently thundered forth the famous passage, "My heart will never fail me," there was a very tempest of excitement, which was carried to its utmost height, in thundering peal on

peal of unbridled approbation, as the great Rhodian gazed full on the house, exclaiming—

> "My heart
> And limbs are still the same: my will as great
> To do you service!"

No one doubted more than a fractional part of this assertion, and Betterton, acting to the end under a continued fire of "*bravoes!*" may have thrown more than the original meaning into the phrase—

> "That little word was worth all the sounds
> That ever I shall hear again!"

Few were the words he was destined ever to hear again; and the subsequent prophecy of his own certain and proximate death, on which the curtain slowly descended, was fulfilled eight and forty hours after they were uttered.

Such was the close of a career which had commenced fifty-one years before! Few other actors of eminence have kept the stage, with the public favour, for so extended a period, with the exception of Cave Underhill, Quin, Macklin, King, and in later times, Bartley and Cooper, most of whom at least accomplished their half century. The record of that career affords many a lesson and valuable suggestion to young actors, but I have to say a word previously of the Bettertons, before the brothers of that name, Thomas and the less known William, assumed the sock and buskin.

Tothill Street, Westminster, is not at present a fine or a fragrant locality. It has a crapulous look

and a villainous smell, and petty traders now huddle together where nobles once were largely housed. Thomas Betterton was born here, about the year 1634–5.[1] The street was then in its early decline, or one of King Charles's cooks could hardly have had home in it. Nevertheless, there still clung to it a considerable share of dignity. Even at that time there was a Tothill Fields House of Correction, whither vagabonds were sent, who used to earn scraps by scraping trenchers in the tents pitched in Petty France. All else in the immediate neighbourhood retained an air of pristine and very ancient nobility. I therefore take the father of Betterton, cook to King Charles, to have been a very good gentleman, in his way. He was certainly the sire of one, and the circumstance of the apprenticeship of young Thomas to a bookseller was no evidence to the contrary. In those days, it was the custom for greater men than the *chefs* in the King's kitchen, namely, the bishops in the King's church, to apprentice their younger sons, at least, to trade, or to bequeath sums for that especial purpose. The last instance I can remember of this traditionary custom presents itself in the person, not indeed of a son of a bishop, but of the grandson of an archbishop, namely, of John Sharp, Archbishop of York from 1691 to 1714. He had influence enough with Queen Anne to prevent Swift from obtaining a bishopric. His son was Archdeacon of Northumberland, and of this archdeacon's sons one was Prebendary of Dur-

[1] Malone gives the date of his baptism as 11th August 1635.

ham, while the other, the celebrated Granville Sharp, the "friend of the Negro," was apprenticed to a linen-draper, on Tower Hill. The early connection of Betterton, therefore, with Rhodes, the Charing Cross bookseller, is not to be accepted as a proof that his sire was not in a "respectable" position in society. That sire had had for his neighbour, only half-a-dozen years before Thomas was born, the well-known Sir Henry Spelman, who had since removed to more cheerful quarters in Barbican. A very few years previously, Sir George Carew resided here, in Caron House, and his manuscripts are not very far from the spot even now. They refer to his experiences as Lord Deputy in Ireland, and are deposited in the library at Lambeth Palace. These great men were neighbours of the elder Betterton, and they had succeeded to men not less remarkable. One of the latter was Arthur, Lord Grey of Wilton, the friend of Spenser, and the Talus of that poet's "Iron Flail." The Greys, indeed, had long kept house in Tothill Street, as had also the Lords Dacre of the South. When Betterton was born here, the locality was still full of the story of Thomas Lord Dacre, who went thence to be hanged at Tyburn, in 1541. He had headed a sort of Chevy-chase expedition into the private park of Sir Nicholas Pelham, in Sussex. In the fray which ensued, a keeper was killed, of which deed my lord took all the responsibility, and, very much to his surprise, was hanged in consequence. The mansion built by his son, the last lord, had not lost its first freshness when the Bettertons resided here, and its

name, *Stourton* House, yet survives in the corrupted form of Strutton Ground.

Thus, the Bettertons undoubtedly resided in a "fashionable" locality, and we may fairly conclude that their title to "respectability" has been so far established. That the street long continued to enjoy a certain dignity is apparent from the fact that, in 1664, when Betterton was rousing the town by his acting, as Bosola, in Webster's "Duchess of Malfy," Sir Henry Herbert established his office of Master of the Revels, in Tothill Street. It was not till the next century that the decline of this street set in. Southern, the dramatist, resided and died there, but it was in rooms over an oilman's shop; and Edmund Burke lived modestly at the east end, before those mysterious thousands were amassed by which he was enabled to establish himself as a country gentleman.

Galt, and the other biographers of Betterton, complain of the paucity of materials for the life of so great an actor. Therein is his life told; or rather Pepys tells it more correctly in an entry in his diary for October 1662, in which he says—"Betterton is a very sober, serious man, and studious, and humble, following of his studies; and is rich already with what he gets and saves." *There* is the great and modest artist's whole life—earnestness, labour, lack of presumption, and the recompense. At the two ends of his career, two competent judges pronounced him to be the best actor they had ever seen. The two men were Pepys, who was born in the reign of Charles I., and Pope, who died in the reign of

George II. This testimony refers to above a century, during which time the stage knew no such player as he. Pope, indeed, notices that old critics used to place Hart on an equality with him ; this is, probably, an error for Harris, who had a party at court among the gay people there who were oppressed by the majesty of Betterton.[1] Pepys alludes to this partisanship in 1663. "This fellow" (Harris), he remarks, "grew very proud of late, the King and everybody else crying him up so high, and that above Betterton, he being a *more aery man*, as he is, indeed."

From the day of Betterton's bright youth to that of his old age, the sober seriousness of the "artist," for which Pepys vouches, never left him. With the dress he assumed, for the night, the nature of the man —be it "Hamlet" or "Thersites," "Valentine" or "Sir John Brute," of whom he was to be the representative. In the "green-room," as on the stage, he was, for the time being, subdued or raised to the quality of him whose likeness he had put on. In presence of the audience, he was never tempted by applause to forget his part, or himself. Once only, Pepys registers, with surprise, an incident which took place at the representation of "Mustapha," in 1667. It was "bravely acted," he says, "only both Betterton and Harris could not contain from laughing, in the midst of a most serious part, from the ridiculous

[1] I see no reason to doubt that Hart rather than Harris was the rival in question. Hart was an older actor than Betterton, and he and Mohun were the supports of the old school, which its admirers pronounced infinitely superior to that of Betterton. See, for instance, the *Historia Histrionica.*

mistake of one of the men upon the stage; which I did not like."

Then for his humility, I find the testimony of Pepys sufficiently corroborated. It may have been politic in him, as a young man, to repair to Mr. Cowley's lodgings in town, and ask from that author his particular views with regard to the Colonel Jolly in the "Cutter of Coleman Street," which had been intrusted to the young actor; but the politic humility of 1661 was, in fact, the practised modesty of his life. In the very meridian of his fame, he, and Mrs. Barry also, were as ready to take instruction respecting the characters of Jaffier and Belvidera, from poor battered Otway, as they subsequently were from that very fine gentleman, Mr. Congreve, when they were cast for the hero and heroine of his comedies. Even to bombastic Rowe, who hardly knew his own reasons for language put on the lips of his characters, they listened with deference; and, at another period, "Sir John and Lady Brute" were not undertaken by them till they had conferred with the author, solid Vanbrugh.

The mention of these last personages reminds me of a domestic circumstance of interest respecting Betterton. He and Mrs. Barry acted the principal characters in "The Provoked Wife;" the part of Lady Fancyfull was played by Mrs. Bowman. This young lady was the adopted child of the Bettertons, and the daughter of a friend (Sir Frederick Watson, Bart.) whose indiscretion or ill-luck had scattered that fortune the laying of the foundation of which is recorded by Pepys. To the sire Betterton had in-

trusted the bulk of his little wealth as a commercial venture to the East Indies. A ruinous failure ensued, and I know of nothing which puts the private life of the actor in so pleasing a light, as the fact of his adopting the child of the wholly ruined man who had nearly ruined *him*. He gave her all he had to bestow, careful instruction in his art; and the lady became an actress of merit. This merit, added to considerable personal charms, won for her the homage of Bowman, a player who became, in course of time, the father of the stage, though he never grew, confessedly, old. In after years, he would converse freely enough of his wife and her second father, Betterton; but if you asked the carefully-dressed Mr. Bowman anything with respect to his age, no other reply was to be had from him than—"Sir, it is very well!"

From what has been previously stated, it will be readily believed that the earnestness of Betterton continued to the last. Severely disciplined, as he had been by Davenant, he subjected himself to the same discipline to the very close; and he was not pleased to see it disregarded or relaxed by younger actors whom late and gay "last nights" brought ill and incompetent to rehearsal. Those actors might have reaped valuable instruction out of the harvest of old Thomas's experience and wisdom, had they been so minded.

Young actors of the present time—time when pieces run for months and years; when authors prescribe the extent of the run of their own dramas, and when nothing is "damned" by a patient public—our

young actors have little idea of the labours undergone by the great predecessors who gave glory to the stage and dignity to the profession. Not only was Betterton's range of characters unlimited, but the number he "created" was never equalled by any subsequent actor of eminence—namely, about one hundred and thirty! In some single seasons he studied and represented no less than eight original parts—an amount of labour which would shake the nerves of the stoutest among us now.

His brief relaxation was spent on his little Berkshire farm, whence he once took a rustic to Bartholomew Fair for a holiday. The master of the puppet-show declined to take money for admission—"Mr. Betterton," he said, "is a brother actor!" Roger, the rustic, was slow to believe that the puppets were not alive; and so similar in vitality appeared to him, on the same night, at Drury Lane, the Jupiter and Alcmena in "Amphitryon," played by Betterton and Mrs. Barry, that on being asked what he thought of them, Roger, taking them for puppets, answered, "They did wonderfully well for rags and sticks."

Provincial engagements were then unknown. Travelling companies, like that of Watkins, visited Bath, a regular company from town going thither only on royal command; but magistrates ejected strollers from Newbury; and Reading would not tolerate them, even out of respect for Mr. Betterton. At Windsor, however, there was a troop fairly patronised, where, in 1706, a Mistress Carroll, daughter of an old Parliamentarian, was awakening shrill echoes

by enacting Alexander the Great. The lady was a friend of Betterton's, who had in the previous year created the part of Lovewell in her comedy of the "Gamester." The powers of Mrs. Carroll had such an effect on Mr. Centlivre, one of the cooks to Queen Anne, that he straightway married her; and when, a few months later, Betterton played Sir Thomas Beaumont, in the lady's comedy, "Love at a Venture,"[1] his friend, a royal cook's wife, furnished but an indifferent part for a royal cook's son.

In other friendships cultivated by the great actor, and in the influences which he exerted over the most intellectual men who were his friends, we may discover proofs of Betterton's moral worth and mental power. Glorious Thomas not only associated with "Glorious John," but became his critic,—one to whom Dryden listened with respect, and to whose suggestions he lent a ready acquiescence. In the poet's "Spanish Friar," there was a passage which spoke of kings' bad titles growing good by time; a supposed fact which was illustrated by the lines—

> "So, when clay's burned for a hundred years,
> It starts forth china!"

The player fearlessly pronounced this passage "*mean*," and it was forthwith cancelled by the poet.

Intimate as this incident shows Betterton to have been with Dryden, there are others which indicate a closer intimacy of the player with Tillotson. The divine was a man who placed charity above rubrics,

[1] Should be Sir Thomas Beaumont in "The Platonic Lady."

and discarded bigotry as he did perukes. He could extend a friendly hand to the benevolent Arian, Firmin, and welcome, even after he entered the archiepiscopal palace at Lambeth, such a visitor as the great actor Betterton. Did objection come from the rigid and ultra-orthodox?—the prelate might have reminded them that it was not so long since a bishop was hanged, and that the player was a far more agreeable and, in every respect, a worthier man than the unlucky diocesan of Waterford. However this may be questioned or conceded, it is indisputable that when Tillotson and Betterton met, the greatest preacher and the greatest player of the day were together. I think, too, that the divine was, in the above respect, somewhat indebted to the actor. We all remember the story how Tillotson was puzzled to account for the circumstance that his friend the actor exercised a vaster power over human sympathies and antipathies than he had hitherto done as a preacher. The reason was plain enough to Thomas Betterton. "You, in the pulpit," said he, "only tell a story: I, on the stage, show facts." Observe, too, what a prettier way this was of putting it than that adopted by Garrick when one of his clerical friends was similarly perplexed. "I account for it in this way," said the latter Roscius: "You deal with facts as if they were fictions; I deal with fictions as if I had faith in them as facts." Again, what Betterton thus remarked to Tillotson was a modest comment, which Colley Cibber has rendered perfect in its application, in the words

which tell us that "the most a Vandyke can arrive at is to make his Portraits of Great Persons seem to *think*. A Shakspeare goes farther yet, and tells you *what* his Pictures thought. A Betterton steps beyond 'em both, and calls them from the grave, to breathe and be themselves again in Feature, Speech, and Motion." That Tillotson profited by the comment of Betterton—more gracefully than Bossuet did by the actors, whom he consigned, as such, to the nethermost Gehenna—is the more easily to be believed, from the fact that he introduced into the pulpit the custom of preaching from notes. Thenceforth, he left off "telling his story," as from a book, and, having action at command, could the nearer approach to the "acting of facts."

"*Virgilium tantum vidi!*" Pope said this of Dryden, whom he once saw when a boy. He was wont to say of Betterton, that he had known him from his own boyhood upwards, till the actor died, in 1710, when the poet was twenty-two years of age. The latter listened eagerly to the old traditions which the player narrated of the earlier times. Betterton was warrant to him, on the authority of Davenant, from whom the actor had it, that there was no foundation for the old legend which told of an ungenerous rivalry between Shakspeare and Old Ben. The player who had been as fearless with Dryden as Socrates was with his friend Euripides—"judiciously lopping" redundant nonsense or false and mean maxims, as Dryden himself confesses — was counsellor, rather than critic or censor, with young Pope. The latter,

at the age of twelve years, had written the greater portion of an imitative epic poem, entitled *Alcander, Prince of Rhodes.* I commend to artists in search of a subject the incident of Pope, at fifteen or sixteen, showing this early effort of his Muse to Betterton. It was a poem which abounded in dashing exaggerations, and fair imitations of the styles of the then greater English poets. There was a dramatic vein about it, however, or the player would not have advised the bard to convert his poem into a play. The lad excused himself. He feared encountering either the law of the drama or the taste of the town; and Betterton left him to his own unfettered way. The actor lived to see that the boy was the better judge of his own powers, for young Pope produced his *Essay on Criticism* the year before Betterton died. A few years later the poet rendered any possible fulfilment of the player's counsel impossible, by dropping the manuscript of *Alcander* into the flames. Atterbury had less esteem for this work than Betterton. "I am not sorry your *Alcander* is burnt," he says; "but had I known your intentions I would have interceded for the first page, and put it, with your leave, among my curiosities."

Pope remembered the player with affection. For some time after Betterton's decease the print-shops abounded with mezzotinto engravings of his portrait by Kneller. Of this portrait the poet himself executed a copy, which still exists. His friendly intercourse with the half-mad Irish artist, Jervas, is well known. When alone, Pope was the poet; with

Jervas, and under his instructions, he became an artist —in his way, but yet an artist—if a copier of portraits deserves so lofty a name. In 1713, he writes to Gay:—"You may guess in how uneasy state I am, when every day the performances of others appear more beautiful and excellent, and my own more despicable. I have thrown away three Dr. Swifts, each of which was once my vanity, two Lady Bridgewaters, a Duchess of Montague, half-a-dozen Earls, and one Knight of the Garter." He perfected, however, and kept his portrait of Betterton, from Kneller, which passed into the collection of his friend Murray, and which is now in that of Murray's descendant, the Earl of Mansfield.

Kneller's portrait of Betterton is enshrined among goodly company at princely Knole—the patrimony of the Sackvilles. It is there, with that of his fellow-actor, Mohun, his friend Dryden, and his great successor Garrick—the latter being the work of Reynolds. The grand old Kentish Hall is a fitting place for such a brotherhood.

This master of his art had the greatest esteem for a *silent* and *attentive* audience. It was easy, he used to say, for any player to rouse the house, but to subdue it, render it rapt and hushed to, at the most, a murmur, was work for an artist; and in such effects no one approached him. And yet the rage of Othello was more "in his line" than the tenderness of Castalio; but he touched the audience in his rage. Harris competed with him for a brief period, but if he ever excelled him it was only in very light comedy. The

dignity and earnestness of Betterton were so notorious and so attractive, that people flocked only to hear him speak a prologue, while brother actors looked on, admired, and despaired.

Age, trials, infirmity, never damped his ardour. Even angry and unsuccessful authors, who railed against the players who had brought their dramas to grief, made exception of Betterton. He was always ready, always perfect, always anxious to effect the utmost within his power. Among the foremost of his merits may be noticed his freedom from all jealousy, and his willingness to assist others up the height which he had himself surmounted. That he played Bassanio to Dogget's Shylock is, perhaps, not saying much by way of illustration; but that he acted Horatio to Powell's Lothario; that he gave up Jupiter (Amphitryon) and Valentine, two of his original parts, to Wilks, and even yielded Othello, one of the most elaborate and exquisite of his "presentments," to Thurmond, *are* fair instances in point. When Bowman introduced young Barton Booth to "old Thomas," the latter welcomed him heartily, and after seeing his Maximus, in "Valentinian," recognised in him his successor. At that moment the town, speculating on the demise of their favourite, had less discernment. They did not know whether Verbruggen, with his voice like a cracked drum, or idle Powell, with his lazy stage-swing, might aspire to the sovereignty; but they were slow to believe in Booth, who was not the only young actor who was shaded in the setting glories of the sun of the English theatre.

When Colley Cibber first appeared before a London audience he was a "volunteer" who went in for practice; and he had the misfortune, on one occasion, to put the great master out by some error on his own part. Betterton subsequently inquired the young man's name and the amount of his salary; and hearing that the former was Cibber, and that, as yet, he received nothing, "Put him down ten shillings a week," said Betterton, "and forfeit him five." Colley was delighted. It was placing his foot on the first round of the ladder; and his respect for "Mr. Betterton" was unbounded. Indeed there were few who did not pay him some homage. The King himself delighted to honour him. Charles, James, Queen Mary, and Queen Anne, sent him assurances of their admiration; but King William admitted him to a private audience, and when the patentees of Drury Lane were, through lack of general patronage, suggesting the expediency of a reduction of salaries, great Nassau placed in the hands of Betterton the licence which freed him from the thraldom of the Drury tyrants, and authorised him to open the second theatre erected in Lincoln's Inn Fields. Next to his most sacred Majesty, perhaps the most formidable personage in the kingdom, in the eyes of the actors, was the Lord Chamberlain, who was master of the very lives of the performers, having the absolute control of the stage whereby they lived. This potentate, however, seemed ever to favour Betterton. When unstable, yet useful, Powell suddenly abandoned Drury Lane, to join the company in Lincoln's Inn Fields, the Cham-

berlain did not deign to notice the offence; but when, all as suddenly, the capricious and unreliable Powell abandoned the house in the Fields, and betook himself again to that in the Lane—the angry Lord Chamberlain sent a "messenger" after him to his lodgings, and clapped the unoffending Thespian, for a couple of days, in the Gate House.

While Powell was with Betterton, the latter produced the "Fair Penitent," by Rowe, Mrs. Barry being the Calista. When the dead body of Lothario was lying decently covered on the stage, Powell's dresser, Warren, lay there for his master, who, requiring the services of the man in his dressing-room, and not remembering where he was, called aloud for him so repeatedly, and at length so angrily, that Warren leapt up in a fright, and ran from the stage. His cloak, however, had got hooked to the bier, and this he dragged after him, sweeping down, as he dashed off in his confusion, table, lamps, books, bones, and upsetting the astounded Calista herself. Irrepressible laughter convulsed the audience, but Betterton's reverence for the dignity of tragedy was shocked, and he stopped the piece in its full career of success, until the town had ceased to think of Warren's escapade.

I know of but one man who has spoken of Betterton at all disparagingly—old Anthony Aston. But even that selfish cynic is constrained so to modify his censure as to convert it into praise. When Betterton was approaching threescore years and ten, Anthony could have wished that he "would have resigned the part of Hamlet to some young actor who might have *perso-*

nated, though," mark the distinction, "*not have acted it better*." Aston's grounds for his wish are so many justifications of Betterton; "for," says Anthony, "when he threw himself at Ophelia's feet, he appeared a little too grave for a young student just from the University of Wittenberg." "His repartees," Anthony thinks, "were more those of a philosopher than the sporting flashes of young Hamlet;" as if Hamlet were not the gravest of students, and the most philosophical of young Danes! Aston caricatures the aged actor only again to commend him. He depreciates the figure which time had touched, magnifies the defects, registers the lack of power, and the slow sameness of action; hints at a little remains of paralysis, and at gout in the now thick legs, profanely utters the words "fat" and "clumsy," and suggests that the face is "slightly pock-marked." But we are therewith told that his air was serious, venerable, and majestic; and that though his voice was "low and grumbling, he could turn it by an artful climax which enforced an universal attention even from the fops and orange-girls." Cibber declares that there was such enchantment in his voice alone, the multitude no more cared for sense in the words he spoke, "than our musical connoisseurs think it essential in the celebrated airs of an Italian Opera." Again, he says, "Could *how* Betterton spoke be as easily known as *what* he spoke, then might you see the Muse of Shakspeare in her triumph." "I never," says honest Colley, "heard a line in tragedy come from *Betterton*, wherein my judgment, my ear, and my imagination were not fully

satisfied, which, since his time, I cannot equally say of any one actor whatsoever." This was written in 1740, the year before little David took up the rich inheritance of "old Thomas"—whose Hamlet, however, the latter actor could hardly have equalled. The next great pleasure to seeing Betterton's Hamlet is to read Cibber's masterly analysis of it. A couple of lines reveal to us the leading principle of his Brutus. "When the Betterton-Brutus," says Colley, "was provoked in his dispute with Cassius, his spirit flew only to his eye; his steady look alone supplied that terror which he disdained an intemperance in his voice should rise to." In his least effective characters, he, with an exception already noted, excelled all other actors; but in characters such as Hamlet and Othello he excelled himself. Cibber never beheld his equal for at least two-and-thirty years after Betterton's death, when, in 1741, court and city, with doctors of divinity and enthusiastic bishops, were hurrying to Goodman's Fields, to witness the Richard of the gentleman from Ipswich, named Garrick.

During the long career of Betterton he played at Drury Lane, Dorset Gardens, Lincoln's Inn Fields (in both theatres), and at the Opera-house in the Haymarket. The highest salary awarded to this great master of his art was £5 per week, which included £1 by way of pension to his wife, after her retirement in 1694. In consideration of his merits, he was allowed to take a benefit in the season of 1708-9, when the actor had an ovation. In money for admission, he received, indeed, only £76; but in complimen-

tary guineas, he took home with him to Russell Street £450 more. The terms in which the *Tatler* spoke of him living,—the tender and affectionate, manly and heart-stirring passages in which the same writer bewailed him when dead,—are eloquent and enduring testimonies of the greatness of an actor, who was the glory of our stage, and of the worth of a man whose loss cost his sorrowing widow her reason.[1] "*Decus et Dolor.*" "The grace and the grief of the theatre." It is well applied to him who laboured incessantly, lived irreproachably, and died in harness, universally esteemed and regretted. He was the jewel of the English stage; and I never think of him, and of some to whom his example was given in vain, without saying, with Overbury, "I value a worthy actor by the corruption of some few of the quality, as I would do gold in the ore; I should not mind the dross, but the purity of the metal."

The feeling of the English public towards Betterton is in strong contrast with that of the French towards their great actor, Baron. Both men grew old in the public service, but both were not treated with equal respect in the autumn of that service. Betterton, at seventy, was upheld by general esteem and crowned by general applause. When Baron, at seventy, was playing Nero, the Paris pit audience, longing for novelty, hissed him as he came down the stage. The fine old player calmly crossed his

[1] It is generally implied, if not stated outright, that Mrs. Betterton never recovered her reason after her husband's death; but this seems an error, because she made a Will, which is dated 10th March 1711-12, when she was presumably sane.

arms, and looking his rude assailants in the face, exclaimed, "Ungrateful pit! 'twas I who taught you!" That was the form of Baron's *exit;* and Clairon was as cruelly driven from the scene when her dimming eyes failed to stir the audience with the old, strange, and delicious terror. In other guise did the English public part with their old friend and servant, the noble actor, fittingly described in the licence granted to him by King William, as "Thomas Betterton, Gentleman."

Mr. Garrick as King Lear

THE DUKE'S THEATRE, DORSET GARDEN.

CHAPTER VI.

"EXEUNT" AND "ENTER."

AFTER Betterton, there was not, in the Duke's Company, a more accomplished actor than Harris. He lived in gayer society than Betterton, and cared more for the associates he found there. He had some knowledge of art, danced gracefully, and had that dangerous gift for a young man—a charming voice, with a love for displaying it. His portrait was taken by Mr. Hailes;—"in his habit of Henry V., mighty like a player;" and as Cardinal Wolsey; which latter portrait may now be seen in the Pepysian Library at Cambridge.

Pepys assigns good grounds for his esteem for Harris. "I do find him," says the diarist, "a very excellent person, such as in my whole acquaintance I do not know another better qualified for converse, whether in things of his own trade, or of other kind; a man of great understanding and observation, and very agreeable in the manner of his discourse, and civil, as far as is possible. I was mighty pleased with his company," a company with which were united, now Killigrew and the rakes, and anon, Cooper the artist, and "Cooper's cosen Jacke," and "Mr. Butler, that wrote Hudibras," being, says Mr. Pepys, "all eminent men in their way." Indeed, Harris was to be found in company even more eminent than the above, and at the great coffee-house in Covent Garden he listened to or talked with Dryden, and held his own against the best wits of the town. The playwrights were there too; but these were to be found in the coffee-houses, generally, often wrapped up in their cloaks, and eagerly heeding all that the critics had to say to each other respecting the last new play.

Harris was aware that in one or two light characters he was Betterton's equal. He was a restless actor, threatening, when discontented, to secede from the Duke's to the King's Company, and causing equal trouble to his manager Davenant, and to his monarch Charles—the two officials most vexed in the settling of the little kingdom of the stage.

There was a graceful, general actor of the troop to which Harris belonged, who drew upon himself the

special observation of the Government at home and an English ambassador abroad. Scudamore was the original Garcia of Congreve's "Mourning Bride;" he also played amorous young knights, sparkling young gentlemen, scampish French and English beaux, gay and good-looking kings, and roystering kings' sons; such as Harry, Prince of Wales. Off the stage, he enacted another part. When King James was in exile, Scudamore was engaged as a Jacobite agent, and he carried many a despatch or message between London and St. Germains. But our ambassador, the Earl of Manchester, had his eye upon him. One of the Earl's despatches to the English Government, written in 1700, concludes with the words:—"One Scudamore, a player in Lincoln's Inn Fields, has been here, and was with the late King, and often at St. Germains. He is now, I believe, at London. Several such sort of fellows go and come very often; but I cannot see how it is to be prevented, for without a positive oath nothing can be done to them." The date of this despatch is August 1700, at which time the player ought to have been engaged in a less perilous character, for an entry in Luttrell's Diary, 28th May 1700, records that "Mr. Scudamore of the play-house is married to a young lady of £4000 fortune, who fell in love with him."

Cave Underhill was another member of Davenant's Company. He was not a man for a lady to fall in love with; but in 1668 Davenant pronounced him the truest comedian of his troop. He was on the

stage from 1661 to 1710, and during that time the town saw no such Gravedigger in "Hamlet" as this tall, fat, broad-faced, flat-nosed, wide-mouthed, thick-lipped, rough-voiced, awkwardly-active low comedian. So modest was he also that he never understood his own popularity, and the house was convulsed with his solemn Don Quixote and his stupid Lolpoop in "The Squire of Alsatia" without Cave's being able to account for it.[1]

In the stolid, the booby, the dully malicious, the bluntly vivacious, the perverse humour, combining wit with ill-nature, Underhill was the chief of the actors of the half century during which he kept the stage. Cibber avers thus much, and adds that he had not seen Cave's equal in Sir Sampson Legend in Congreve's "Love for Love." A year before the old actor ceased to linger on the stage he had once made light with laughter, a benefit was awarded him, viz., on the 3d of June 1709.[2] The patronage of the public was previously bespoken by Mr. Bickerstaffe, in the *Tatler*, whose father had known "honest Cave Underhill" when he was a boy. The *Tatler* praises the old comedian for the natural style of his acting, in which he avoided all exaggeration, and never added a word to his author's text, a vice with the younger actors of the time.

On this occasion Underhill played his old part of

[1] Anthony Aston, from whom this description is quoted, says that it was not modesty that prevented his understanding why he was admired, but sheer stupidity.

[2] He practically retired from the active work of his profession about 1707.

the Gravedigger, professedly because he was fit for no other. His judgment was not ill founded, if Cibber's testimony be true that he was really worn and disabled, and excited pity rather than laughter. The old man died a pensioner of the theatre whose proprietors he had helped to enrich, with the reputation of having, under the pseudonym of Elephant Smith, composed a mock funeral sermon on Titus Oates; and with the further repute of being an ultra-Tory, addicted in coffee-houses to drink the Duke of York's health more heartily than that of his brother, the King.

With rare exchange of actors, and exclusive right of representing particular pieces, the two theatres continued in opposition to each other until the two companies were formed into one in the year 1682. Meanwhile, fire destroyed the old edifice of the King's Company, in Drury Lane, in January 1672, and till Wren's new theatre was ready for them in 1674, the unhoused troop played occasionally at Dorset Gardens,[1] or at Lincoln's Inn Fields, as opportunity offered. On the occasion of opening the new house, contemporary accounts state that the prices of admission were raised: to the boxes, from 2s. 6d. to 4s.; pit, from 1s. 6d. to 2s. 6d.; the first gallery, from 1s. to 1s. 6d.; and the upper gallery, from 6d. to 1s. Pepys, however, on the 19th October 1667, paid 4s. for admittance to the upper boxes, if his record be true.[2]

[1] I can find no authority for this. The King's Company appear to have played regularly at Lincoln's Inn Fields. Dorset Garden was the new theatre of the Duke's Company.

[2] Pepys is no doubt accurate. The higher prices were charged apparently from the opening of the old theatre in 1663.

Down to the year 1682, the King's Company lost several old and able actors, and acquired only Powell, Griffin, and Beeston. George Powell was the son of an obscure actor. His own brilliancy was marred by his devotion to jollity, and this devotion became the more profound as George saw himself surpassed by steadier actors, one of whom, Wilks, in his disappointment, he challenged to single combat, and, in the cool air of "next morning," was sorry for his folly. Idleness made him defer learning his parts till the last moment; his memory often failed him at the most important crisis of the play; and the public displeasure fell heavily and constantly on this clever but reckless actor. The *Tatler* calls him the "haughty George Powell," when referring to his appearance in Falstaff for his benefit, in April 1712. "The haughty George Powell hopes all the good-natured part of the town will favour him whom they applauded in Alexander, Timon, Lear, and Orestes, with their company this night, when he hazards all his heroic glory in the humbler condition of honest Jack Falstaff." Valuable aid, like the above, he obtained from the *Spectator* also, with useful admonition to boot, from which he did not care to profit; and he fell into such degradation that his example was a wholesome terror to young actors willing to follow it, but fearful of the consequences. During his career, from 1687 to 1714, in which year he died, he originated about forty new parts, and in some of them, such as Brisk, in the "Double Dealer;" Aboan, in "Oroonoko;" the gallant, gay Lothario; Lord Morelove, in the "Careless Hus-

band;" and Portius, in "Cato," he has rarely been equalled. On the first night of the "Relapse," in which he played Worthy, he was so fired by his libations, that Mrs. Rogers, as Amanda, was frightened out of her wits by his tempestuous love-making. Powell's literary contributions to the drama were such as a man of his quality was likely to make,—chiefly plagiarisms awkwardly appropriated.

Griffin was an inferior actor to Powell; but he was a wiser and a better man. He belonged to that class of actors whom "society" welcomed with alacrity. He was, moreover, of the class which had served in the field as well as on the stage, and when "Captain Griffin" died in Queen Anne's reign, the stage lost a respectable actor, and society a clever and a worthy member.

The accessions to the Duke's Company were of more importance than those to the company of the Theatre Royal. In 1672, the two poets, Lee and Otway, tempted fortune on the stage: Lee, in one or two parts, such as the Captain of the Watch, in Payne's "Fatal Jealousy," and Duncan, in "Macbeth;" Otway as the King, in Mrs. Behn's "Forced Marriage." They both failed. Lee, one of the most beautiful of readers, lost his voice through nervousness; Otway, audacious enough at the coffee-houses, lost his confidence. There were eight other actors of the period whose success was unquestionable and well deserved. Little Bowman, who between this period and 1739, the year of his death, never failed to appear when his name was in the bills. He was a noted bell-ringer, had sung

songs to Charles II., and, when "father of the stage," he exacted applause from the second George. Cademan was another of the company. Like Betterton and Cartwright, he had learnt the mystery of the book-trade before he appeared as a player. He was driven from the latter vocation through an accident. Engaged in a fencing-scene with Harris, in "The Man's the Master," he was severely wounded by his adversary's foil, in the hand and eye, and he lost power not only of action but of speech. For nearly forty years the company assigned him a modest pension; and between the benevolence of his brethren and the small profits of his publishing, his life was rendered tolerable, if not altogether happy.

His comrade, Jevon, an ex-dancing master, was one of the hilarious actors. He was the original Jobson in his own little comedy, "A Devil of a Wife," which has been altered into the farce of "The Devil to Pay." He took great liberties with authors and audience. He made Settle half mad and the house ecstatic, when having, as Lycurgus, Prince of China, to "*fall on his sword*," he placed it flat on the stage, and falling over it, "*died*," according to the direction of the acting copy.[1] He took as great liberties at the coffee-house. "You are wiping your dirty boots with my clean napkin," said an offended waiter to him. "Never mind, boy," was the reply; "I'm not proud—it will do for me!" The dust of this jester lies in Hampstead churchyard.

[1] Genest conjectures, I think justly, that this must have happened at a rehearsal. Downes says nothing about the house being ecstatic.

Longer known was Anthony Lee or Leigh, that industrious and mirthful player, who, in the score of years he was before the public—from 1672 to 1692—originated above thrice that number of characters. His masterpiece was Dryden's Spanish Friar, Dominique. How he *looked* in that once famous part may be seen by any one who can gain access to Knowle, where his portrait, painted for the Earl of Dorset, still hangs—and all but speaks. But we may see how Leigh looked by another portrait, painted in words, by Cibber. "In the canting, grave hypocrisy, of the Spanish Friar, Leigh stretched the veil of piety so thinly over him, that in every look, word, and motion, you saw a palpable, wicked slyness shine throughout it. Here he kept his vivacity demurely confined, till the pretended duty of his function demanded it: and then he exerted it with a choleric, sacerdotal insolence. I have never yet seen any one that has filled them" (the scenes of broad jests) "with half the truth and spirit of Leigh. I do not doubt but the poet's knowledge of Leigh's genius helped him to many a pleasant stroke of nature, which, without that knowledge, never might have entered into his conception." Leigh had the art of making pieces—dull to the reader, side-splitting mirth to an audience. In such pieces he and Nokes kept up the ball between them; but with the players perished also the plays.

Less happy than Leigh was poor Matthew Medbourne, an actor of merit, and a young man of some learning, whose brief career was cut short by a too

fervent zeal for his religion, which led him into a participation in the "Popish Plot." The testimony of Titus Oates caused his arrest, on the 26th of November 1678, and his death;—for poor Medbourne died of the Newgate rigour in the following March. He is memorable, as being the first who introduced Molière's "Tartuffe" on the English stage, in a close translation, which was acted in 1670, with remarkable success. Cibber's "Nonjuror" (1717), and Bickerstaffe's "Hypocrite" (1768), were only adaptations—the first of "Tartuffe," and the second of the "Nonjuror." Mr. Oxenford, however, reproduced the original in a more perfect form than Medbourne, in a translation in verse, which was brought out at the Haymarket, in 1851, with a success most honestly earned by all, and especially deserving on the part of Mr. Webster, who played the principal character.

Sandford and Smith were two actors whose names constantly recur together, but whose merits were not all of the same degree. The tall, handsome, manly Smith, frequently played Banquo; when his ghost, in the same tragedy, was represented by the short, spare, drolly ill-featured, and undignified Sandford! The latter was famous for his villains—from those of tragedy to ordinary stage ruffians in broad belt and black wig—permanent type of those wicked people in melodramas to this day. This idiosyncrasy amusingly puzzled Charles II., who, in supposed allusion to Shaftesbury, declared that the greatest villain of his time was fair-haired.

The public of his period were so accustomed to see Sandford represent the malignant heroes, that when they once saw him as an honest man, who did not prove to be a crafty knave before the end of the fifth act, they hissed the piece out of sheer vexation. Sandford rendered villainy odious by his forcible representation of it. By a look, he could win the attention of an audience "to whatever he judged worth more than their ordinary notice;" and by attending to the punctuation of a passage, he divested it of the jingle of rhyme, or the measured monotony of blank verse.

So misshapen, harsh, fierce, yet craftily gentle and knavishly persuasive could Sandford render himself, Cibber believes that Shakspeare, conscious of other qualities in him, would have chosen him to represent Richard, had poet and player been contemporaneous. The generous Colley adds, that if there was anything good in his own Richard, it was because he had modelled it after the fashion in which he thought Sandford would have represented that monarch. Sandford withdrew from the stage, after thirty-seven years' service, commencing in 1661 and terminating in 1698.

The career of his more celebrated colleague, Smith, extended only from 1663 to 1696, and that with the interruption of several years when his strong Toryism made him unacceptable to the prejudiced Whig audiences of the early part of the reign of William.[1] He originally represented Sir Fopling

[1] Very doubtful. The cause of his retirement was no doubt the

Flutter (1676), and Pierre (1682); Chamont (1680), in "The Orphan," and Scandal (1695), in "Love for Love." In the following year he died in harness. The long part of Cyaxares, in "Cyrus the Great," overtaxed his strength, and on the fourth representation of that wearisome tragedy, Smith was taken ill, and died.

King James, in the person of Smith, vindicated the nobility of his profession. "Mr. Smith," says Cibber, with fine satire, "whose character as a gentleman could have been no way impeached, had he not degraded it by being a celebrated actor, had the misfortune, in a dispute with a gentleman behind the scenes, to receive a blow from him. The same night an account of this action was carried to the King, to whom the gentleman was represented so grossly in the wrong, that the next day his Majesty sent to forbid him the court upon it. This indignity cast upon a gentleman only for maltreating a player, was looked upon as the concern of every gentleman! and a party was soon formed to assert and vindicate their honour, by humbling this favoured actor, whose slight injury had been judged equal to so severe a notice. Accordingly, the next time Smith acted, he was received with a chorus of catcalls, that soon convinced him he should not be suffered to proceed in his part; upon which, without the least discomposure, he ordered the curtain

quarrel afterwards mentioned. If he was off the stage for eleven years, as Dr. Doran says, he must have retired in 1684, long before William was king.

to be dropped, and having a competent fortune of his own, thought the conditions of adding to it, by remaining on the stage, were too dear, and from that day entirely quitted it." *Not* "entirely," for he returned to it in 1695, after a secession of eleven years, under the persuasion, it is believed, of noble friends and ancient comrades. Dr. Burney states that the audience made a political matter of it. If so, Whigs and Tories had not long to contend, for the death of this refined player soon supervened.

Of the two most eminent ladies who joined the Duke's Company previous to the union of the two houses, Lady Slingsby (formerly Mrs. Aldridge, next Mrs. Lee,) is of note for the social rank she achieved; Mrs. Barry for a theatrical reputation which placed her on a level with Betterton himself. Lady Slingsby withdrew from the stage in 1685, after a brief course of ten or a dozen years. She died in the spring of 1694, and was interred in old St. Pancras churchyard, as "Dame Mary Slingsby, Widow." That is the sum of what is known of a lady whom report connects with the Yorkshire baronets of Scriven. Of her colleague, there is more to be said; but the "famous Mrs. Barry" may claim a chapter to herself.

RIVER VIEW OF DUKE'S THEATRE

CHAPTER VII.

ELIZABETH BARRY.

THE "great Mrs. Barry," the *Handbook of London* tells us, lies buried in Westminster Cloisters. I did not there look for her tomb. To come at the grave of the great actress, I passed through Acton Vale and into the ugliest of village churches, and, after service, asked to be shown the tablet which recorded the death and burial of Elizabeth Barry. The pew-opener directed me to a mural monument which, I found, bore the name of one of the family of Smith!

I remonstrated. The good woman could not account for it. She had always taken that for Elizabeth

Barry's monument. It was in the church somewhere. "There is no stone to any such person in this church," said the clerk, "and I know 'em all!" We walked down the aisle discussing the matter, and paused at the staircase at the west end; and as I looked at the wall, while still conversing, I saw in the shade the tablet which Curll says is outside, in God's Acre, and thereon I read aloud these words:—"Near this place lies the body of Elizabeth Barry, of the parish of St. Mary-le-Savoy, who departed this life the 7th of November, 1713, aged 55 years." "That is she!" said I.

The two officials looked puzzled and inquiring. At length the pew-opener ventured to ask: "And who was she, sir?"

"The original Monimia, Belvidera, Isabella, Calista"——

"Lor!" said the good woman, "only a player!"

"*Only a player!*" This of the daughter of an old Cavalier!

The seventeenth century gave many ladies to the stage, and Elizabeth Barry was certainly the most famous of them. She was the daughter of a barrister, who raised a regiment for the King, and thereby was himself raised to the rank of colonel. The effort did not help his Majesty, and it ruined the Colonel, whose daughter was born in the year 1658.

Davenant[1] took the fatherless girl into his house, and trained her for the stage, while the flash of her

[1] Curll, in his History of the Stage (1741), says it was Lady Davenant, a particular friend of Sir William Davenant.

light eyes beneath her dark hair and brows was as yet mere girlish spirit; it was not intelligence. *That* was given her by Rochester. Davenant was in despair at her dulness; but he acknowledged the dignity of her manners. At three separate periods managers rejected her. "She will never be an actress!" they exclaimed. Rochester protested that he would make her one in six months.

The wicked young Earl, who lived in Lincoln's Inn Fields, near the theatre, became her master, and, of course, fell in love with his pupil. The pains he bestowed upon his young mistress were infinite. Sentence by sentence he made her understand her author; and the intelligence of the girl leaped into life and splendour under such instruction. To familiarise her with the stage, he superintended thirty rehearsals thereon, of each character in which she was to appear. Of these rehearsals twelve were in full costume; and when she was about to enact Isabella, the Hungarian Queen, in "Mustapha," the page who bore her train was tutored so to move as to aid in the display of grace and majesty which was to charm the town.

For some time, however, the town refused to recognise any magic in the charmer; and managers despaired of the success of a young actress who could not decently thread the mazes of a country dance. Hamilton owned her beauty, but denied her talent. Nevertheless, she one night burst forth in all her grandeur, and Mustapha and Zanger were not more ardently in love with the brilliant queen than the

audience were. At the head of the latter were Charles II. and the Duke and Duchess of York. Rochester had asked for their presence, and they came to add to the triumph of Colonel Barry's daughter.

Crabbed old Anthony Aston, the actor and prompter, spoke disparagingly of the young lady. According to him, she was no colonel's daughter, but "woman to Lady Shelton, my godmother." The two conditions were not incompatible. It was no unusual thing to find a lady in straitened circumstances fulfilling the office of "woman," or "maid," to the wives of peers and baronets. We have an instance in the *Memoirs of Mrs. Delaney*, and another in the person of Mrs. Siddons.

Successful as Elizabeth Barry was in parts which she had studied under her preceptor, Lord Rochester, she cannot be said to have established herself as the greatest actress of her time till the year 1680. Up to this period she appeared in few characters suited to her abilities. In tragedies, she enacted the confidants to the great theatrical queens, Mrs. Lee and Mrs. Betterton; in comedies, the rattling, reckless, and audacious women, at whose sallies the pit roared approbation, and the box ladies were not much startled. But, in the year just named, Otway produced his tragedy of "The Orphan, or the Unhappy Marriage," in which Mrs. Barry was the Monimia to the Castalio of Betterton. On the same night the part of the Page was charmingly played by a future great actress, Mrs. Bracegirdle, then not six years old. In Monimia, Mrs. Barry exercised some of those attributes which

she possessed above all actresses Cibber had ever seen, and which those who had not seen her were unable to conceive. "In characters of greatness," says Cibber, in his *Apology*, "she had a presence of elevated dignity; her mien and motion superb, and gracefully majestic; her voice full, clear, and strong, so that no violence of passion could be too much for her; and when distress or tenderness possessed her, she subsided into the most affecting melody and softness."

From the position which she took by acting Monimia, Mrs. Barry was never shaken by any rival, however eminent. Her industry was as indefatigable as that of Betterton. During the thirty-seven years she was on the stage, beginning at Dorset Gardens, in 1673, and ending at the Haymarket, in 1710, she originated one hundred and twelve characters! Monimia was the nineteenth of the characters of which she was the original representative; the first of those which mark the "stations" of her glory. In 1682, she added another leaf to the chaplet of her own and Otway's renown, by her performance of Belvidera. In the softer passions of this part she manifested herself the "mistress of tears," and night after night the town flocked to weep at her bidding, and to enjoy the luxury of woe. The triumph endured for years. Her Monimia and Belvidera were not even put aside by her Cassandra, in the "Cleomenes" of Dryden, first acted at the Theatre Royal, in 1692. "Mrs. Barry," says the author, "always excellent, has, in this tragedy, excelled herself, and gained a reputation, beyond any woman whom I have ever seen on the theatre." The

praise is not unduly applied; for Mrs. Barry could give expression to the rant of Dryden, and even to that of Lee, without ever verging towards bombast. "In scenes of anger, defiance, or resentment," writes Cibber, "while she was impetuous and terrible, she poured out the sentiment with an enchanting harmony." Anthony Aston describes her in tragedy as "solemn and august;" and she, perhaps, was never more so than in Isabella, the heroine of the tragic drama rather than tragedy, by Southerne, "The Fatal Marriage." Aston remarks, that "her face ever expressed the passions; it somewhat preceded her action, as her action did her words." Her versatility was marvellous, and it is not ill illustrated by the fact that in the same season she created two such opposite characters as Lady Brute, in Vanbrugh's "Provoked Wife," and Zara, in Congreve's "Mourning Bride." The last of her great tragic triumphs, in a part of which she was the original representative, occurred in 1703, when, in her forty-fifth year, she played Calista, in "The Fair Penitent," that wholesale felony of Rowe from Massinger! Though the piece did not answer the expectations of the public, Mrs. Barry did not fall short of them in the heroine; and she perhaps surpassed expectation, when, in 1705, she elicited the admiration of the town by her creation of the sparkling character of Clarissa, in "The Confederacy." By this time she was growing rich in wealth as well as in glory. In former days, when the play was over, the attendant boy used to call for "Mrs. Barry's clogs!" or "Mrs. Bracegirdle's

pattens!" but *now*, "Mrs. Barry's chair" was as familiar a sound as "Mrs. Oldfield's." If she was not invariably wise in the stewardship of her money, some portions were expended in a judicious manner creditable to her taste. At the sale of Betterton's effects, she purchased the picture of Shakspeare which Betterton bought from Davenant, who had purchased it from some of the players after the theatres had been closed by authority. Subsequently, Mrs. Barry sold this relic, for forty guineas, to a Mr. Keck, whose daughter carried it with her as part of her dowry, when she married Mr. Nicoll, of Colney Hatch. *Their* daughter and heiress, in her turn, took the portrait and a large fortune with her to her husband, the third Duke of Chandos; and, finally, Mrs. Barry's effigy of Shakspeare passed with another bride into another house, Lady Anne Brydges, the daughter of the Duke and Duchess, carrying it with her to Stowe on her marriage with the Marquis of Buckingham, subsequently Duke of Buckingham and Chandos. The Chandos portrait of the great dramatist is thus descended.

Mrs. Barry, like many other eminent members of her profession, was famous for the way in which she uttered some single expression in the play. The "Look there!" of Spranger Barry, as he passed the body of Rutland, always moved the house to tears. So, the "Remember twelve!" of Mrs. Siddon's Belvidera; the "Well, as you guess!" of Edmund Kean's Richard; the "Qu'en dis tu?" of Talma's Auguste; the "Je crois!" of Rachel's Pauline; the

"Je vois!" of Mademoiselle Mars's Valerie, were "points" which never failed to excite an audience to enthusiasm. But there were two phrases with which Mrs. Barry could still more deeply move an audience. When, in "The Orphan," she pronounced the words, "Ah, poor Castalio!" not only did the audience weep, but the actress herself shed tears abundantly. The other phrase was in a scene of Banks's puling tragedy, "The Unhappy Favourite, or the Earl of Essex." In that play, Mrs. Barry represented Queen Elizabeth, and *that* with such effect that it was currently said, the people of her day knew more of Queen Elizabeth from her impersonation of the character than they did from history. The apparently commonplace remark, "What mean my grieving subjects?" was invested by her with such emphatic grace and dignity, as to call up murmurs of approbation which swelled into thunders of applause. Mary of Modena testified her admiration by bestowing on the mimic queen the wedding-dress Mary herself had worn when she was united to James II., and the mantle borne by her at her coronation. Thus attired, the queen of the hour represented the Elizabeth, with which enthusiastic crowds became so much more familiar than they were with the Elizabeth of history. But this "solemn and august" tragedian could also command laughter, and make a whole house joyous by the exercise of another branch of her vocation. "In free comedy," says Aston, "she was alert, easy, and genteel, pleasant in her face and action, filling the stage with variety of

gesture." So entirely did she surrender herself to the influences of the characters she represented, that in stage dialogues she often turned pale or flushed red, as varying passions prompted.

With the audience she was never for a moment out of favour after she had made her merit apparent. They acknowledged no greater actress,—with the single exception of Mrs. Betterton in the character of Lady Macbeth. Nevertheless, on and behind the stage Mrs. Barry's supremacy was sometimes questioned and her commands disobeyed. When she was about to play Roxana to the Statira of Mrs. Boutell, in Nat. Lee's "Rival Queens, or the Death of Alexander the Great," she selected from the wardrobe a certain veil which was claimed by Mrs. Boutell as of right belonging to her. The property-man thought so too, and handed the veil to the last-named lady. His award was reasonable, for she was the original Statira, having played the part to the matchless Alexander of Hart, and to the glowing Roxana of the fascinating Marshall. I fear, however, that the lady was not moderate in her victory, and that by flaunting the trophy too frequently before the eyes of the rival queen, the daughter of Darius exasperated too fiercely her Persian rival in the heart of Alexander. The rage and dissension set down for them in the play were, at all events, not simulated. The quarrel went on increasing in intensity from the first, and culminated in the gardens of Semiramis. When Roxana seized on her detested enemy there, and the supreme struggle took place, Mrs. Barry, with

the exclamation of "Die, sorceress, die! and all my wrongs die with thee!" sent her polished dagger right through the stiff armour of Mrs. Boutell's stays. The consequences were a scratch and a shriek, but there was no great harm done. An investigation followed, and some mention was made of a real jealousy existing in Mrs. Barry's breast in reference to an admirer of lower rank than Alexander, lured from her feet by the little, flute-voiced Boutell. The deed itself was, however, mildly construed, and Mrs Barry was believed when she declared that she had been carried away by the illusion and excitement of the scene. We shall see the same scene repeated, with similar stage effects, by Mrs. Woffington and Mrs. Bellamy.

If there were a lover to add bitterness to the quarrel engendered by the veil, Mrs. Barry might have well spared one of whom she possessed so many. Without being positively a transcendent beauty, her attractions were confessed by many an Antony from the country, who thought their world of acres well lost for the sake of a little sunshine from the eyes of this vanquishing, imperious, banquetting, heart and purse destroying Cleopatra. There were two classes of men who made epigrams, or caused others to make them against her, namely, the adorers on whom she ceased to smile, and those on whom she refused to smile at all. The coffee-house poetry which these perpetrated against her is the reverse of pleasant to read; but, under the protection of such a wit as Etherege, or such a fine gentleman as Rochester, Mrs. Barry cared little for her puny assailants.

Tom Brown taxed her with mercenary feelings; but against that and the humour of writers who affected intimate acquaintance with her affairs of the heart and purse, and as intimate a knowledge of the amount which Sir George Etherege and Lord Rochester bequeathed to their respective daughters, of whom Mrs. Barry was the mother, she was armed. Neither of these children survived the "famous actress." She herself hardly survived Betterton—at least on the stage. The day after the great tragedian's final appearance, Mrs. Barry trod the stage for the last time. The place was the old Haymarket, the play the "Spanish Friar," in which she enacted the Queen. And I can picture to myself the effect of the famous passage, when the Queen impetuously betrays her overwhelming love. "Haste, my Teresa, haste; and call him back!" "Prince Bertram?" asks the confidant; and then came the full burst, breaking through all restraint, and revealing a woman who seemed bathed in love. "*Torrismond!* There is no other HE!"

Mrs. Barry took no formal leave of the stage, but quietly withdrew from St. Mary-le-Savoy, in the Strand, to the pleasant village of Acton. Mrs. Porter, Mrs. Rogers, Mrs. Knight, and Mrs. Bradshaw, succeeded to her theatrical dominion, by partition of her characters.

If tragedy lost its queen, Acton gained a wealthy lady. Her professional salary had not been large, but her "benefits" were very productive; they who admired the actress or who loved the woman, alike

pouring out gold and jewels in her lap. It was especially for her that performers' benefits were first devised. Authors alone had hitherto profited by such occasions, but, in recognition of her merit, King James commanded one to be given on her behalf, and what was commenced as a compliment soon passed into a custom.

In a little more than three years from the date when the curtain fell before her for the last time, Elizabeth Barry died. Brief resting season after such years of toil; but, perhaps, sufficient for better ends after a career, too, of unbridled pleasure! "This great actress," says Cibber, "dy'd of a fever, towards the latter years of Queen Anne; the year I have forgot, but perhaps you will recollect it, by an expression that fell from her in blank verse, in her last hours, when she was delirious, viz.—

"Ha! ha! and so they make us lords, by dozens!"

This, however, does not settle the year so easily as Colley thought. In December 1711, Queen Anne, by an unprecedented act, created twelve new peers, to enable the measures of her Tory ministers to be carried in the Upper House. Mrs. Barry died two years later, on the 7th of November 1713, and the utterance of the words quoted above only indicates that her wandering memory was then dealing with incidents full two years old.

They who would see how Mrs. Barry looked living, have only to consult Kneller's grand picture, in which she is represented with her fine hair drawn back from

her forehead, the face full, fair, and rippling with intellect. The eyes are inexpressibly beautiful. Of all her living beauty, living frailty, and living intelligence, there remains but this presentment.

It was customary to compare Mrs. Barry with French actresses; but it seems to me that the only French actress with whom Mrs. Barry may be safely compared is Mademoiselle, or, as she was called with glorious distinction, "the Champmeslé." This French lady was the original Hermione, Berenice, Monimia, and Phædra. These were written expressly for her by Racine, who trained her exactly as Rochester did Elizabeth Barry,—to some glory on the stage, and to some infamy off it. La Champmeslé, however, was more tenderly treated by society at large than the less fortunate daughter of an old royalist colonel. The latter actress was satirised; the former was eulogised by the wits, and she was not even anathematised by French mothers. When La Champmeslé was ruining the young Marquis de Sevigné, his mother wrote proudly of the actress as her "daughter-in-law!" as if to have a son hurried to perdition by so resplendent and destructive a genius, was a matter of exultation!

Having sketched the outline of Mrs. Barry's career, I proceed to notice some of her able, though less illustrious, colleagues.

CONTEST FOR DOGGET'S COAT AND BADGE.

CHAPTER VIII.

"THEIR FIRST APPEARANCE ON THIS STAGE."

On the 16th November 1682, the United Company, the flower of both houses, opened their season at the Theatre Royal, in Drury Lane. The theatre in Dorset Gardens was only occasionally used; and from 1682 to 1695 there was but one theatre in London.

Betterton and Mrs. Barry were, of course, at the head of this company, to which there came some accessions of note; among others Mrs. Percival, better known as Mrs. Mountfort, and finally as Mrs. Verbruggen. A greater accession was that of the charming Mrs. Bracegirdle. The third lady was Mrs.

Jordan, a name to be made celebrated by a later and a greater actress, who had no legal claim to it.

Of the new actors, some only modestly laid the foundations of their glory in this company. Chief of these was Colley Cibber, who, in 1691, played Sir Gentle's Servant in Southerne's "Sir Anthony Love," had a part of nine lines in Chapman's "Bussy d'Amboise," and of seventeen, as Sigismond in Powell's "Alphonso." Bowen, too, began with coachmen, and similar small parts, while that prince of the droll fellows of his time, Pinkethman, commenced his career with a tailor's part, of six lines in length, in Shadwell's "Volunteers." Among the other new actors were Mountfort,[1] Norris,[2] and Doggett, with Verbruggen (or Alexander, as he sometimes called himself, from the character which he loved to play); Gillow, Carlisle, Hodgson, and Peer.

Amid these names, that of Mrs. Mountfort stands out the most brilliantly. Her portrait has been so exquisitely limned by Colley Cibber, that we see her as she lived, and moved, and spoke.

"Mrs. Mountfort was mistress of more variety of humour than I ever knew in any one actress. This variety, too, was attended with an equal vivacity, which made her excellent in characters extremely different. As she was naturally a pleasant mimic, she had the skill to make that talent useful on the stage. Where the elocution is round, distinct, voluble, and various, as Mrs. Mountfort's was, the

[1] Mountfort seems to have acted as early as 1678.

[2] Norris does not appear in the bills till 1699.

mimic there is a great assistance to the actor. Nothing, though ever so barren, if within the bounds of nature, could be flat in her hands. She gave many heightening touches to characters but coldly written, and often made an author vain of his work, that, in itself, had but little merit. She was so fond of humour, in what low part soever to be found, that she would make no scruple of defacing her fair form to come heartily into it, for when she was eminent in several desirable characters of wit and humour, in higher life, she would be in as much fancy, when descending into the antiquated Abigail of Fletcher, as when triumphing in all the airs and vain graces of a fine lady; a merit that few actresses care for. In a play of Durfey's, now forgotten, called 'The Western Lass,' which part she acted, she transformed her whole being—body, shape, voice, language, look and features—into almost another animal, with a strong Devonshire dialect, a broad laughing voice, a poking head, round shoulders, an unconceiving eye, and the most bedizening, dowdy dress that ever covered the untrained limbs of a Joan Trot. To have seen her here, you would have thought it impossible that the same could ever have been recovered to, what was as easy to her, the gay, the lively, and the desirable. Nor was her humour limited to her sex, for while her shape permitted, she was a more adroit, pretty fellow than is usually seen upon the stage. Her easy air, action, mien, and gesture, quite changed from the coif to the cocked-hat and cavalier in fashion. People were so fond of

seeing her a man that when the part of Bayes, in 'The Rehearsal,' had for some time lain dormant, she was desired to take it up, which I have seen her act with all the true coxcombly spirit and humour that the sufficiency of the character required.

"But what found most employment for her whole various excellence at once was the part of Melantha, in 'Mariage à la Mode.' Melantha is as finished an impertinent as ever fluttered in a drawing-room, and seems to contain the most complete system of female foppery that could possibly be crowded into the tortured form of a fine lady. Her language, dress, motion, manners, soul, and body, are in a continual hurry to be something more than is necessary or commendable. The first ridiculous airs that break from her are upon a gallant, never seen before, who delivers her a letter from her father, recommending him to her good graces as an honourable lover. Here, now, one would think that she might naturally show a little of the sex's decent reserve, though never so slightly covered. No, sir! not a tittle of it! Modesty is the virtue of a poor-souled country gentlewoman. She is too much a court-lady to be under so vulgar a confusion. She reads the letter, therefore, with a careless, dropping lip, and an erected brow, humming it hastily over, as if she were impatient to outgo her father's commands, by making a complete conquest of him at once; and that the letter might not embarrass her attack, crack! she crumbles it at once into her palm, and pours upon him her whole artillery of airs, eyes, and

motion. Down goes her dainty, diving body to the ground, as if she were sinking under the conscious load of her own attractions; then launches into a flood of fine language and compliment, still playing her chest forward in fifty falls and risings, like a swan upon waving water; and, to complete her impertinence, she is so rapidly fond of her own wit that she will not give her lover leave to praise it. Silent assenting bows, and vain endeavours to speak, are all the share of the conversation he is admitted to, which at last he is relieved from, by her engagement to half a score visits, which she *swims* from him to make, with a promise to return in a twinkling."

Happy Mrs. Mountfort, whom, as actress and woman, Cibber has thus made live for ever! As Mrs. Percival, she was the original representative of Nell in the piece now known as "The Devil to Pay;" as Mrs. Mountfort,—Belinda, in the "Old Batchelor;" and as Mrs. Verbruggen,—Charlotte Welldon, in "Oroonoko;"[1] Lady Lurewell, in the "Constant Couple;" and Bizarre, in the "Inconstant." She died in 1703.

In some respects, Mrs. Bracegirdle, who was on the stage from 1680 to 1707, and subsequently lived in easy retirement till 1748, was even superior to Mrs. Mountfort. Mrs. Barry saw her early promise, and encouraged her in her first essays. In her peculiar line she was supreme, till the younger and irresistible talent of Mrs. Oldfield brought about her resignation.

[1] Dr. Doran spells "Oroonoko" wrong throughout. In this he follows Genest; but the latter corrects his blunder in his "errata."

Unlike either of these brilliant actresses, she was exposed to sarcasm only on account of her excellent private character. Platonic friendships she *did* cultivate; with those, slander dealt severely enough; and writers like Gildon were found to declare, that they believed no more in the innocency of such friendships than they believed in John Mandeville; while others, like Tom Brown, only gave her credit for a discreet decorum. Cibber, more generous, declares that her virtuous discretion rendered her the delight of the town; that whole audiences were in love with her, because of her youth, her cheerful gaiety, her musical voice, and her happy graces of manner. Her form was perfect. Cibber says, "she had no greater claims to beauty than what the most desirable brunette might pretend to." Other contemporaries notice her dark brown hair and eyebrows, her dark, sparkling eyes, the face from which the blush of emotion spread in a flood of rosy beauty over her neck, and the intelligence and expression which are superior to mere beauty. She so enthralled her audience that, it is quaintly said, she never made an *exit* without the audience feeling as if they had moulded their faces into an imitation of hers. Then she was as good, practically, as she was beautiful; and the poor of the neighbourhood in which she resided looked upon her as a beneficent divinity.

Her performance of Statira was considered a justification of the frantic love of such an Alexander as Lee's; and "when she acted Millamant, all the faults, follies, and affectation of that agreeable tyrant were

venially melted down into so many charms and attractions of a conscious beauty." Young gentlemen of the town pronounced themselves in tender but unrequited love with her. Jack, Lord Lovelace, sought a return for his ardent homage, and obtained not what he sought. Authors wrote characters for her, and poured out their own passion through the medium of her adorers in the comedy. For her, Congreve composed his Araminta and his Cynthia, his Angelica, his Almeria, and the Millamant, in the "Way of the World," which Cibber praises so efficiently. That this dramatist was the only one whose homage was well-received and presence ever welcome to her, there is no dispute. When a report was abroad that they were about to marry, the minor poets hailed the promised union of wit and beauty; and even Congreve, not in the best taste, illustrated her superiority to himself, when he wrote of her—

"Pious Belinda goes to prayers
Whene'er I ask the favour,
Yet the tender fool's in tears
When she thinks I'd leave her.
Would I were free from this restraint,
Or else had power to win her;
Would she could make of me a saint,
Or I of her a sinner."

The most singular testimony ever rendered to this virtue occurred on the occasion when Dorset, Devonshire, Halifax, and other peers, were making of that virtue a subject of eulogy over a bottle. Halifax remarked, they might do something better than praise her; and thereon he put down two hundred guineas,

which the contributions of the company raised to eight hundred,—and this sum was presented to the lady, as a homage to the rectitude of her private character.

Whether she accepted this tribute, I do not know; but I know that she declined another from Lord Burlington, who had long loved her in vain. "One day," says Walpole, "he sent her a present of some fine old china. She told the servant he had made a mistake; that it was true the letter was for her, but the china for his lady, to whom he must carry it. Lord! the countess was so full of gratitude, when her husband came home to dinner."

Mrs. Bracegirdle lived to pass the limit of fourscore, and to the last was visited by much of the wit, the worth, and some of the folly of the town. On one occasion, a group of her visitors were discussing the merits of Garrick, whom she had not seen, and Cibber spoke disparagingly of his Bayes, preferring in that part his own pert and vivacious son, Theophilus. The old actress tapped Colley with her fan; "Come, come, Cibber," she remarked; "tell me if there is not something like envy in your character of this young gentleman. The actor who pleases everybody must be a man of merit." Colley smiled, tapped his box, took a pinch, and, catching the generosity of the lady, replied: "Faith, Bracey, I believe you are right; the young fellow *is* clever!"

Between 1682 and 1695, few actors were of greater note than luckless Will Mountfort, of whose violent death the beauty of Mrs. Bracegirdle was the unin-

tentional cause. Handsome Will was the efficient representative of fops who did not forget that they were gentlemen. So graceful, so ardent, so winning as a lover, actresses enjoyed the sight of him pleading at their feet. In the younger tragic characters he was equally effective. His powers of mimicry won for him the not too valuable patronage of Judge Jeffries, to gratify whom, and the lord mayor and minor city magnates, in 1685, Mountfort pleaded before them in a feigned cause, in which, says Jacobs, "he aped all the great lawyers of the age in their tone of voice, and in their action and gesture of body," to the delight of his hearers. On the stage, he was one of the most natural of actors; and even Queen Mary was constrained to allow, that disgusted as she was with Mrs. Behn's "Rover," she could not but admire the grace, ease, intelligence, and genius of Mountfort, who played the dissolute hero, sang as well as he spoke, and danced with stately dignity. But poor Will was only the hero of a brief hour; and the inimitable original of Sir Courtly Nice was murdered by two of the most consummate villains of the order of gentlemen then in town.

Charles, Lord Mohun, had, a few years previous to this occurrence, been tried with the Earl of Warwick for a murder, arising out of a coffee-house brawl;[1] on being acquitted by the House of Lords, he solemnly promised never to get into such a difficulty again. But one Captain Richard Hill, being in "love" with

[1] The trial of Mohun and Warwick took place seven years after Mountfort's death—that is, in 1699.

Mrs. Bracegirdle, who heartily despised him, wanted a villain's assistance in carrying off the beautiful actress, and found the man and the aid he needed in Lord Mohun. In Buckingham Court, off the Strand, where the captain lodged, the conspirators laid their plans; and learning that Mrs. Bracegirdle, with her mother and brother, was to sup one evening at the house of a friend, Mr. Page, in Princes Street, Drury Lane, they hired six soldiers—emissaries always then to be had for such work—to assist in seizing her and carrying her off in a carriage, stationed near Mr. Page's house. About ten at night, of the 9th December 1692, the attempt was made; but what with the lady's screams, the resistance of the friend and brother, and the gathering of an excited mob, it failed; and a strange compromise was made, whereby Lord Mohun and Hill were allowed to unite in escorting her home to her house, in Howard Street, Strand. In that street lived also Will Mountfort, against whom the captain uttered such threats, in Mrs. Bracegirdle's hearing, that she, finding that my lord and the captain remained in the street—the latter with a drawn sword in his hand, and both of them occasionally drinking canary—sent to Mrs. Mountfort, to warn her husband, who was from home, to look to his safety. Warned, but not alarmed, honest Will, who loved his wife and respected Mrs. Bracegirdle, came round from Norfolk Street, saluted Lord Mohun (who embraced him, according to the then fashion with men), and said a word or two to his lordship, not complimentary to the character of Hill. Thence,

from the latter—words, a blow, and a pass of his sword through Mountfort's body—which the poor actor, as he lay dying on the floor of his own dining-room, declared, was given by Hill before Mountfort could draw his sword. The captain fled from England, but my lord, surrendering to the watchmen of the Duchy of Lancaster, was tried by his peers, fourteen of whom pronounced him guilty of murder ; but as above threescore gave a different verdict, Mohun lived on till he and the Duke of Hamilton hacked one another to death in that savage butchery—the famous duel in Hyde Park.[1]

Mountfort, at the age of thirty-three, and with some reputation as the author of half-a-dozen dramas, was carried to the burying-ground of St. Clement's Danes, where his remains rest with those of Lowen, one of the original actors of Shakspeare's plays, Tom Otway, and Nat. Lee. His fair and clever widow became soon the wife of Verbruggen—a rough diamond—a wild, untaught, yet not an unnatural actor. So natural, indeed, was he, that Lord Halifax took Oroonoko from Powell, who was originally cast for it, and gave it to Verbruggen. Such was the power of Lord Chamberlains! He could touch tenderly the finer feelings, as well as excite the wilder emotions of the heart. Powell, on the other hand, was a less impassioned player, who would appear to have felt more than he made his audience feel, for in the

[1] It is only fair to Hill to say that Dr. Doran adopts a theory regarding the death of Mountfort which is, at least, doubtful. It is quite as possible that he was killed in a fair fight with Hill.

original *Spectator*, No. 290, February 1712, Powell begs the public to believe, that if he pauses long in Orestes, he has not forgotten his part, but is only overcome at the sentiment.

Verbruggen died in 1708. Among his many original characters were Oroonoko, Bajazet, Altamont, and Sullen. He survived his wife about five years. I think if she loved Will Mountfort, she stood in some awe of fiery Jack Verbruggen; who, in his turn, seems to have had more of a rough courtesy than a warm affection for her. "For he would often say," remarks Anthony Aston, "D— me! though I don't much value my wife, yet nobody shall affront her!" and his sword was drawn on the least occasion, which was much in fashion in the latter end of King William's reign. And let me add here, that an actor's sword was sometimes drawn for the king. James Carlisle, a respectable player, whose comedy, "The Fortune Hunters," was well received in 1689, was not so tempted by success as to prefer authorship to soldiership in behalf of a great cause. When the threatened destruction of the Irish Protestants was commenced with the siege of Londonderry, Carlisle entered King William's army, serving in Ireland. In 1691, he was in the terrible fray in the morass at Aghrim, under Ginkell, but immediately led by Talmash. In the twilight of that July day, the Jacobite general, St. Ruth, and the poor player from Drury Lane, were lying among the dead; and there James Carlisle was buried, with the remainder of the six hundred slain on the victor's

side, before their surviving companions in arms marched westward.

Carlisle's fellow-actor, Bowen, was a "low comedian" of some talent, and more conceit. A curious paragraph in the *Post-Boy*, for November 16th, 1700, shows that he left the stage for a time, and under singular circumstances. The paragraph runs thus:—

"We hear that this day Mr. Bowen, the late famous comedian at the new Play-house, being convinced by Mr. Collier's book against the stage, and satisfied that a shopkeeper's life was the readiest way to heaven of the two, opens a cane shop, next door to the King's Head Tavern, in Middle Row, Holborn, where it is not questioned but all manner of canes, toys, and other curiosities, will be obtained at reasonable rates. This sudden change is admired at, as well as the reasons which induced him to leave such a profitable employ; but the most judicious conclude it is the effect of a certain person's good nature, who has more compassion for his soul than for his own."

Bowen was not absent from the stage more than a year. He was so jealous of his reputation, that when he had been driven to fury by the assertion that Johnson played Jacomo, in the "Libertine," better than he did, and by the emphatic confirmation of the assertion by Quin, he fastened a quarrel on the latter, got him in a room in a tavern, alone, set his back to the door, drew his sword, and assailed Quin with such blind fury, that he killed himself by falling on Quin's weapon. The dying Irishman, however, generously acquitted his adversary of all blame, and the greater

actor, after trial, returned to his duty, having innocently killed, but not convinced poor Bowen, who naturally preferred his Jacomo to that of Johnson.[1]

Peer, later in life, came to grief also, but in a different way. The spare man was famous for two parts; the Apothecary, in "Romeo and Juliet," and the actor who humbly speaks the prologue to the play in "Hamlet." These parts he played excellently well. Nature had made him for them; but she was not constant to her meek and lean favourite; for Peer grew fat, and being unable to act any other character with equal effect, he lost his vocation, and he died lingeringly of grief, in 1713, when he had passed threescore years and ten. He had been property-man also, and in this capacity the theatre owed him, at the time of his decease, among other trifling sums, "threepence, for blood, in 'Macbeth.'"[2]

Norris, or "Jubilee Dicky," was a player of an odd, formal, little figure, and a squeaking voice. He was a capital comic actor, and owed his by-name to his success in playing Dicky, in the "Constant Couple." So great was this success, that his sons seemed to derive value from it, and were announced as the sons of

[1] Dr. Doran in his MS. gives the following curious and valuable note regarding Quin's trial and punishment, which states a fact absolutely unknown to any of Quin's biographers:—"1718. The papers of the day say that Quin and Bowen fought on the question which was the honester man. The coroner's inquest found it 'Se Defendendo;' but an Old Bailey jury returned a verdict of Manslaughter, and at the end of the Session I find, among the names of malefactors sent to Tyburn, or otherwise punished, 'Mr. Quin, the comedian, burnt in the hand.'"

[2] This is taken from the *Guardian*, No. 82. Genest calls it a humorous account of him.

Jubilee Dicky. He is said to have acted Cato, and other tragic characters, in a serio-burlesque manner. He was the original Scrub, and Don Lopez in the "Wonder," and died about the year 1733.

Dogget, who was before the public from 1691 to 1713, and who died in 1721, was a Dublin man—a failure in his native city, but in London a deserved favourite, for his original and natural comic powers. He always acted Shylock as a ferociously comic character. Congreve discerned his talent, and wrote for him Fondlewife in the "Old Batchelor," Sir Paul Pliant in the "Double Dealer," and the very different part of Ben in "Love for Love." This little, lively, cheerful fellow, was a conscientious actor. Somewhat illiterate—he spelt "whole" phonetically, without the *w*—he was a gentleman in his acts and bearing. He was prudent too, and when he retired from partnership in Drury Lane Theatre, with Cibber and Wilks (from 1709 to 1712), on the admission of Booth, which displeased him, he was considered worth £1000 a year. The consciousness of his value, and his own independence of character, gave some trouble to managers and Lord Chamberlains. On one occasion, having left Drury Lane, at some offence given, he went to Norwich, whence he was brought up to London, under my Lord's warrant. Dogget lived luxuriously on the road, at the Chamberlain's expense, and when he came to town, Chief Justice Holt liberated him, on some informality in the procedure.

Little errors of temper, and extreme carefulness in

guarding his own interests, are now forgotten. Of his strong political feeling we still possess a trace. Dogget was a staunch Whig. The accession of the house of Brunswick, dated from a first of August. On that day, in 1716, and under George I., Dogget gave "an *orange*-coloured livery, with a badge, representing Liberty," to be rowed for by six watermen, whose apprenticeship had expired during the preceding year. He left funds for the same race to be rowed for annually, from London Bridge to Chelsea, "on the same day for ever." The match still takes place, with modifications caused by changes on and about the river; but the winners of the money-prizes, now delivered at Fishmongers' Hall, have yet to be thankful for that prudence in Dogget, which was sneered at by his imprudent contemporaries.

Dogget never took liberties with an audience; Pinkethman was much addicted to that bad habit. He would insert nonsense of his own, appeal to the gallery, and delight in their support, and the confusion into which the other actors on the stage were thrown; but the joke grew stale at last, and the offender was brought to his senses by loud disapprobation. He did not lose his self-possession; but assuming a penitent air, with a submissive glance at the audience, he said in a stage *aside*, "Odso, I believe I have been in the wrong here!" This cleverly-made confession brought down a round of applause, and "Pinkey" made his exit, corrected, but not disgraced. Another trait of his stage life is worthy of notice. He had been remarkable for his

reputation as a speaking Harlequin, in the "Emperor of the Moon." His wit, audacity, emphasis, and point, delighted the critics, who thought that "expression" would be more perfect if the actor laid aside the inevitable mask of Harlequin. Pinkethman did so; but all expression was thereby lost. It was no longer the saucy Harlequin that seemed speaking. Pinkey, so impudent on all other occasions, was uneasy and feeble on this, and his audacity and vivacity only returned on his again assuming the sable vizard.

Pinkethman was entirely the architect of his own fortune. He made his way by talent and industry. He established the Richmond Theatre, and there was no booth at Greenwich, Richmond, or May-Fair, so well patronised as his. "He's the darling of *Fortunatus*," says Downes, "and has gained more in theatres and fairs in twelve years than those who have tugged at the oar of acting these fifty."

After the division of the company into two, in 1695, the following new actors appeared between that period and the close of the century. At Drury Lane, Hildebrand Horden, Mrs. Cibber,[1] Johnson, Bullock, Mills, Wilks; and, as if the century should expire, reckoning a new glory,—Mrs. Oldfield. At Lincoln's Inn Fields,—Thurmond, Scudamore, Verbruggen, who joined from Drury Lane, leaving his clever wife there, Pack; and, that this house might boast a glory something like that enjoyed by its rival, in Mrs. Oldfield,—in 1700 Booth made his first appearance, with a success, the

[1] The elder Mrs. Cibber (second edition).

significance of which was recognised and welcomed by the discerning and generous Betterton.

Mrs. Oldfield, Wilks, and Booth, like Colley Cibber, though they appeared towards the close of the seventeenth, really belong to the eighteenth century, and I shall defer noticing them till my readers and I arrive at that latter period. The rest will require but a few words. Young Horden was a handsome and promising actor, who died of a brawl at the Rose Tavern, Covent Garden. He and two or three comrades were quaffing their wine, and laughing, at the bar, when some fine gentlemen, in an adjacent room, affecting to be disturbed by the gaiety of the players, rudely ordered them to be quiet. The actors returned an answer which brought blood to the cheek, fierce words to the lips, hand to the sword, and a resulting fight, in which the handsome Hildebrand was slain by a Captain Burgess. The captain was carried to the Gate-house, from which, says the *Protestant Mercury*, he was rescued at night, "by a dozen or more of fellows with short clubs and pistols." So ended, in 1696, Hildebrand Horden, not without the sympathy of loving women, who went in masks, and some without the vizard, to look upon and weep over his handsome, shrouded corpse. A couple of paragraphs in Luttrell's Diary conclude Horden's luckless story: "Saturday, 17th October, Mr. John Pitts was tried at the session for killing Mr. Horden, the player, and acquitted, he being no ways accessary thereto, more than being in company when 'twas done." On Tuesday, 30th November 1697, the diarist writes:

"Captain Burgess, *who killed* Mr. Horden, the player, has obtained his Majesty's pardon."

Of Mrs. Cibber, it can only be said that she was the wife of a great, and of Bullock, that he was the father of a good, actor. To Johnson no more praise can be awarded than to Bullock.[1] William[2] Mills deserves a word or two more of notice than these last. He was on the stage from 1696 to 1737,[3] and though only a "solid" actor, he excelled Cibber, in Corvino, in Jonson's "Volpone;" surpassed Smith in the part of Pierre, and was only second to Quin, in Volpone himself. His Ventidius, in Dryden's tragedy, "All for Love," to Booth's Anthony, is praised for its natural display of the true spirit of a rough and generous soldier. Of his original parts, the chief were Jack Stanmore, in "Oroonoko;" Aimwell, in the "Beaux Stratagem;" Charles, in the "Busy Body;" Pylades, in the "Distressed Mother;" Colonel Briton, in the "Wonder;" Zanga, in the "Revenge;" and Manly, in the "Provoked Husband." That some of these were beyond his powers is certain; but he owed his being cast for them to the friendship of Wilks, when the latter was manager. To a like cause may be ascribed the circumstance of his having the same salary as Bet-

[1] This is a most inaccurate statement. Benjamin Jonson, or Johnson, was a comedian of the highest order. Davies calls him "That chaste copier of nature," and praises him heartily: Victor is enthusiastic in his appreciation of him: and Lloyd, in his "Actor," specially commends him. He was very great in his more famous namesake's comedies.

[2] Should be John Mills. William was a much less important actor.

[3] 1736. He died November or December 1736.

terton, £4 per week, and £1 for his wife; but this was not till after Betterton's death.

At Lincoln's Inn Fields, Thurmond, though a respectable actor, failed to shake any of the public confidence in Betterton. Of Scudamore, I have already spoken. Pack was a vivacious comic actor, whose "line" is well indicated in the characters of Brass, Marplot, and Lissardo, of which he was the original representative. He withdrew from the stage in 1721, a bachelor; and, in the meridian of life, opened a tavern in Charing Cross. I have now named the principal actors and actresses who first appeared between the Restoration and the year 1701, Betterton and Mrs. Barry being the noblest of the players of that half century; Cibber, Booth, and Mrs. Oldfield, the bright promises of the century to come. It is disappointing, however, to find that in the very last year of the seventeenth century "the grand jury of Middlesex presented the two play-houses, and also the bear-garden, as nuisances and riotous and disorderly assemblies." So Luttrell writes, in December 1700, at which time, as contemporary accounts inform us, the theatres were "pestered with tumblers, rope-dancers, and dancing men and dogs from France." Betterton was then in declining health, and appeared only occasionally; the houses, lacking other attraction, were ill attended, and public taste was stimulated by offering the "fun of a fair," where Mrs. Barry had drowned a whole house in tears. The grand jury of Middlesex did not see that with rude amusements the spectators grew rude too.

The jury succeeded in preventing play-bills from being posted in the city, and denounced the stage as a pastime which led the way to murder. The last denunciation was grounded on the fact, that Sir Andrew Slanning had been killed just before, on his way *from* the play-house. When men wore swords and hot tempers these catastrophes were not infrequent. In 1682, a coffee-house was sometimes turned into a shambles by gentlemen calling the actors at the Duke's House "Papists." What was the cause of the fray in which Sir Andrew fell I do not know. Whatever it was, he was run through the body by Mr. Cowlan; and that the latter took some unfair advantage is to be supposed, since he was found guilty of murder, and in December 1700 was executed at Tyburn, with six other malefactors, who, on the same day, in the Newgate slang of the period, went *Westward Hoe!*

On the poor players fell all the disgrace; but I think I shall be able to show, in the next chapter, that the fault lay rather with the poets. These, in their turn, laid blame upon the public; but it is the poet's business to elevate, and not to pander to a low taste. The foremost men of the tuneful brotherhood, of the period from the Restoration to the end of the century, have much to answer for in this last respect.

COLLEY CIBBER.

CHAPTER IX.

THE DRAMATIC POETS.

Noble, gentle, and humble Authors.

It is a curious fact, that the number of dramatic writers between the years 1659–1700, inclusive, exceeds that of the actors. A glance at the following list will show this.

Sir W. Davenant, Dryden, Porter, Mrs. Behn, Lee, Cowley, Hon. James Howard, Shadwell, Sir S. Tuke, Sir R. Stapylton, Lord Broghill (Earl of Orrery), Flecknoe, Sir George Etherege, Sir R. Howard, Lacy (actor), Betterton (actor), Earl of Bristol, Duke

of Buckingham, Dr. Rhodes, Sir Edward Howard, Settle, Caryll (Earl of Caryll, of James II.'s creation), Henry Lucius Carey (Viscount Falkland), Duke of Newcastle, Shirley, Sir Charles Sedley, Mrs. Boothby, Medbourne (actor), Corye, Revet, Crowne, Ravenscroft, Wycherley, Arrowsmith, Neville Payne, Sir W. Killigrew, Duffet, Sir F. Fane, Otway, Durfey, Rawlins, Leanard, Bankes, Pordage, Rymer, Shipman, Tate, Bancroft, Whitaker, Maidwell, Saunders (a boy-poet), and Southerne.

Here are already nearly threescore authors (some few of whom had commenced their career prior to the Restoration) who supplied the two theatres, between 1659 and 1682, in which latter year began that "Union," under which London had but one theatre till the year 1695.

Within the thirteen years of the Union, appeared as dramatic writers,

The Earl of Rochester;—Jevon, Mountfort, Harris, Powell, and Carlisle (actors); Wilson, Brady, Congreve, Wright, and Higden.

From the period of the dissolution of the Union to the end of the century occur the names of

Colley Cibber (actor), Mrs. Trotter (Cockburn), Gould, Mrs. Pix, Mrs. Manley, Norton, Scott, Dogget (actor), Dryden, jun., Lord Lansdowne (Granville), Dilke, Sir John Vanbrugh, Gildon, Drake, Filmer, Motteux, Hopkins, Walker, W. Phillips, Farquhar, Boyer, Dennis, Burnaby, Oldmixon, Mrs. Centlivre (Carroll), Crauford, and Rowe.

In the above list there are above a hundred names

of authors, none of whose productions can now be called stock-pieces; though of some four or five of these writers a play is occasionally performed, to try an actor's skill or tempt an indifferent audience.

Of the actors who became authors, Cibber alone was eminently successful, and of him I shall speak apart. The remainder were mere adapters. Of Betterton's eight plays, I find one tragedy borrowed from Webster; and of his comedies, one was taken from Marston; a second raised on Molière's "George Dandin"; a third was never printed; his "Henry the Fourth" was one of those unhallowed outrages on Shakspeare, of which the century in which it appeared was prolific; his "Bondman" was a poor reconstruction of Massinger's play, in which Betterton himself was marvellously great; and his "Prophetess" was a conversion of Beaumont and Fletcher's tragedy into an opera, by the efficient aid of Henry Purcell, who published the music in score, in 1691. There was noble music wedded to noble words, and for the recreation of those who could appreciate neither; there was a dance of quaint figures from whom, when about to sit down, the chairs slipped under them, took up the measure, and concluded by dancing it out.

Medbourne produced only his translation of the "Tartuffe," Jevon only one comedy. Mountfort, like Betterton, was an indifferent author. His "Injured Lovers" ends almost as tragically as the apocryphal play in which all the characters being killed at the end of the fourth act, the concluding act is

brought to a close by their executors. In Mountfort's loyal tragedy all the principal personages receive their quietus, and the denouement is left in the hands of a solitary and wicked colonel, with a contented mind. "Edward the Third" is so much more natural than the above, that it is by some assigned to Bancroft, while "Zelmane" is only hypothetically attributed to Mountfort, on the ground, apparently, of its absurdities. In the preface to his "Successful Strangers," Mountfort modestly remarks, "I have a natural inclination to poetry, which was born and not bred in me." He showed small inventive power in his bustling comedy, "Greenwich Park," and less respect for a master in minstrelsy, when he turned poor Kit Marlowe's "Doctor Faustus" into an impassioned sort of burlesque, with the addition of Harlequin and Scaramouch to give zest to the buffoonery!

Carlisle, the actor who fell at Aghrim, was the author of the "Fortune Hunters;" and Joseph Harris, who was a poor comedian, and the marrer of four adapted and unsuccessful plays, resumed under Queen Anne his original vocation of engraver to the Mint. The age was one of adapters, whose cry was that Shakspeare would not attract, and accordingly George Powell combined authorship with acting, and borrowed from Shirley, from Brome, and from Middleton. Mrs. Pix, and the romancers, produced a few plays, from one of which a recent dramatist has stolen as boldly as George himself was wont to steal. I allude to the "Imposture Defeated," in which Artan (a demon) enables Hernando, a physician, to foretell

the fate of each patient, according as Artan takes his stand at the foot or at the head of the bed. One word will suffice for Dogget's contribution to stage literature. He was the author of one lively, but not edifying, piece, entitled the "Country Wake," in which he provided himself with a taking part called Hob, and one for Mrs. Bracegirdle—Flora. In a modified form, this piece was known to our grandfathers as "Flora;" or, "Hob in the Well."

The actors themselves, then, were not efficient as authors. Let us now see what the noble gentlemen, the amateur rather than professional poets, contributed towards the public entertainment, and their own reputation, during the last half of the seventeenth century.

They may be reckoned at a dozen and a half, from dukes to knights. Of the two dukes, Buckingham and Newcastle, the former is the more distinguished dramatic writer. He was a man of great wit and no virtue; a member of two universities, but no honour to either. He was one who respected neither his own wife nor his neighbour's, and was faithful to the King only as long as the King would condescend to obey his caprices. From 1627, when he was born, to April 1688, the year of his death, history has placed no generous action of his upon record, but has registered many a crime and meanness. He lived a profligate peer, in a magnificence almost oriental; he died a beggar; bankrupt in everything but impudence. Dryden and Pope have given him everlasting infamy; the latter not without a touch of pity, felt

not at all by the former. Historians have justified the severity of the poets; Gilbert Burnet has dismissed him with a sneer, and Baxter has thrown in a word on behalf of his humanity.

His play of the "Chances" was a mere adaptation of the piece so named, by Beaumont and Fletcher. Plays which were attributed to him, but of which he was not the author, need not be mentioned. The Duke's dramatic reputation rests on his great burlesque tragedy, the "Rehearsal;" but even in this he is said to have had the assistance of Butler, Martin Clifford, and Dr. Sprat. Written to deride the bombastic tragedies then in vogue, Davenant, Dryden, and Sir Robert Howard are, by turns, struck at, under the person of the poet Bayes; and the irritability of the second, under the allusions, are perhaps warrant that the satire was good. The humour is good, too; the very first exhibition of it excited the mirth which afterwards broke into peal upon peal of laughter. The rehearsed play commences with a scene between the royal usher and the royal physician, in a series of whispers; for, as Mr. Bayes remarks, the two officials were plotting against the King; but this fact it was necessary, as yet, to keep from the audience!

Mr. Cavendish, whose services in the royal cause deservedly earned for him that progress through the peerage which terminated in his creation as Duke of Newcastle, was the opposite of Buckingham in most things save his taste for magnificence, in which he surpassed Villiers. Two thousand pounds were as

cheerfully spent on feasting Charles I., as the Duke's blood was vainly shed for the same monarch in the field. He lived like a man who had the purse of Fortunatus; but in exile at Antwerp, he pawned his best clothes and jewels, that he and his celebrated wife might have the means of existence. He was the author of a few plays, two of which were represented after the Restoration. The "Country Captain," and "Variety," were composed in the reign of Charles I. The "Humourous Lovers," and the "Triumphant Widow," subsequently. These are bustling but immoral comedies, suiting, but not correcting the vices of the times; and singular, in their slip-shod style, as coming from the author of the pompous treatise on horses and horsemanship. Pepys ascribes the "Humourous Lovers" to the Duchess. He calls it a "silly play; the most silly thing that ever came upon a stage I was sick to see it, but yet would not but have seen it, that I might the better understand her." Pepys is equally severe against the "Country Captain." The Duke seems to have aimed at the delineation of character, particularly in "Variety," and the "Triumphant Widow, or, the Medley of Humours." Johnson grieves over the oblivion which, in his time, had fallen on these works, and later authors have declared that the Duke's comedies ought not to have been forgotten. They have at least been remembered by some of our modern novelists in want of incident.

Of the three earls, all of whose pieces were produced previous to 1680, there is not much to be said in praise. The eccentric, clever, brave, inconsistent,

contradictory George Digby, Earl of Bristol, he who turned Romanist at the instigation of Don John of Austria, and aiming at office himself, conspired against Clarendon, was the author of one acted piece, "Elvira," one of the two out of which Mrs. Centlivre built up her own clever bit of mosaic, the "Wonder." Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, in whom all the vices of Buckingham were exaggerated; to whom virtue and honour seemed disgusting, and even the affectation of them, or of ordinary decency, an egregious folly, found leisure in the least feverish hour of some five years' drunkenness, to give to the stage an adaptation of "Valentinian," by Beaumont and Fletcher, in which he assigned a part to Mrs. Barry—the very last that any other lover would have thought of for his mistress. The noble poet, little more than thirty years old, lay in a dishonoured grave when his piece was represented, in 1680;[1] but the young actress just named, gaily alluded, in a prologue, to the demure nymphs in the house who had succumbed, nothing loath, to the irresistible blandishments of this very prince of blackguards.

The Earl of Caryll was a man of another spirit. He was the head of the family to which Pope's Carylls belonged, and being a faithful servant of James II., in adversity as well as in prosperity, the King made him an earl, at that former period, when the law of England did not recognise the creation. Caryll was of the party who talked of the unpopularity of Shakspeare, and who for the poet's gold offered poor tinsel

[1] "Valentinian" was probably produced in 1684.

of their own. His rhymed drama of the "English Princess, or the death of Richard the Third," owed its brief favour to the acting of Betterton, who could render even nonsense imposing. His comedy of "Sir Solomon, or the Cautious Coxcomb," was "taken from the French." The chief scenes were mere translations of Molière's "Ecole des Femmes;" but life, and fun, and wit were given to them again by Betterton, who in the comic old Sir Solomon shook the sides of the "house," as easily as he could, in other characters, move them to wonder, or melt them to tears.

In 1664, another "lance was broken with Shakspeare" by Lord Orrery, the Lord Broghill of earlier days. There was something dramatic in this lord's life. He was a marvellous boy, younger son of a marvellous father, the "great Earl of Cork." Before he was fifteen, Dublin University was proud of him. At that age he went on the "grand tour," at twenty married the Earl of Suffolk's daughter, and landed in Ireland, to keep his wedding, on the very day of the outbreak of the Rebellion of 1641. The young bridegroom fought bravely for homestead and king, and went into exile when that king was slain; but he heeded the lure of Cromwell, won for him the victory of Macroom, rescued him from defeat at Clonmel, and crushed Muskerry and his numerous Papal host. From Richard Cromwell, Broghill kept aloof, and helped forward the Restoration, for which service Charles made him a peer—Earl of Orrery. The earl showed his gratitude by deifying kings, and inculcating submissiveness, teaching the impeccability

of monarchs, and the extreme naughtiness of their people. Pepys comically bewails the fact, that on going to see a new piece by Orrery, he sees only an old one under a new name, such wearying sameness is there in the rhymed phrases of them all.

Orrery's tilt against Shakspeare is comprised in his attempt to suppress that poet's "Henry V.," by giving one of his own, in which Henry and Owen Tudor are simultaneously in love with Katherine of France. The love is carried on in a style of stilted burlesque; and yet the dignity and wit of this piece enraptured Pepys—but then he saw it at Court in December 1666, Lord Bellasis having taken him to Whitehall, after seeing "Macbeth" at the Duke's House,—"and there," he says, "after all staying above an hour for the players, the King and all waiting, which was absurd, saw 'Henry V.' well done by the Duke's people, and in most excellent habits, all new vests, being put on but this night. But I sat so high, and so far off, that I missed most of the words, and sat with a wind coming into my back and neck, which did much trouble me. The play continued till twelve at night, and then up, and a most horrid cold night it was, and frosty, and moonshine;" and it might have been worse.

In Orrery's "Mustapha" and "Tryphon," the theme is all love and honour, without variation. Orrery's "Mr. Anthony" is a five-act farce, in ridicule of the manners and morals of the Puritans. Therein the noble author rolls in the mire for the gratification of the pure-minded cavaliers. Over Orrery's "Black

Prince," even vigilant Mr. Pepys himself fell asleep, in spite of the stately dances. Perhaps he was confused by the author's illustration of genealogical history; for in this play, Joan, the wife of the Black Prince, is described as the widow of Edmund, Earl of Kent—*her father!* But what mattered it to the writer whose only teaching to the audience was, that if they did not fear God, they must take care to honour the King? Orrery's "Altemira" was not produced till long after his death. It is a roar of passion, love (or what passed for it), jealousy, despair, and murder. In the concluding scene the slaughter is terrific. It all takes place in presence of an unobtrusive individual, who carries the doctrine of non-intervention to its extreme limit. When the persons of the drama have made an end of one another, the quietly delighted gentleman steps forward, and blandly remarks, that there was so much virtue, love, and honour in it all, that he could not find it in his heart to interfere, though his own son was one of the victims!

A contemporary of Orrery, young Henry Carey, Viscount Falkland, son of the immortal soldier who fell at Newbury, wrote one piece, the "Marriage Night," of which I know nothing, save that it was played in the Lent of 1664; but I do know that the author had wit, for when some one remarked, as Carey took his seat in the House of Commons for the first time, that he looked as if he had not sown his wild oats, he replied, that he had come to the place where there were geese enough to pick them up!

The last of the dramatic lords of this century was

that Lord Lansdowne whom Pope called "Granville the polite," and absurdly compared with Surrey, by awkwardly calling the latter the "Granville of a former age." Granville was a statesman, a Tory, a stiff-backed gentleman in a stiff-backed period, and a sufferer for his opinions. Driven into leisure, he addressed himself to literature, in connection with which he committed a crime against the majesty of Shakspeare, which was unpardonable. He reconstructed the "Merchant of Venice," called it the "Jew of Venice," and assigned Shylock to Dogget. Lord Lansdowne's "She Gallants" is a vile comedy for its "morals," but a vivacious one for its manner. Old Downes, the prompter, sneers at the offence taken at it by some ladies, who, he thinks, affected rather than possessed virtue themselves. But ladies, in 1696, *were* offended at such outrages on decency as this play contains. They were not the first who had made similar protest. Even in this lord's tragedy of "Heroic Love," Achilles and Briseis are only a little more decent than Ravenscroft's loose rakes and facile nymphs. The only consolation one has in reading the "Jew of Venice" (produced in 1701) is, that there are some passages the marrer could not spoil. As for Shylock, Rowe expressed the opinion of the public when, in spite of the success of the comic edition of the character, he said, modestly enough, "I cannot but think the character was *tragically designed* by the author." Dryden, Pope, and Johnson have in their turn eulogised Granville; but, as a dramatic poet, he reflects no honour either on the century in which he was born, or on that in which he

died. Indeed, of the dramatist peers of the seventeenth century, there is not a play that has survived to our times.

And now, coming to a dozen of baronets, knights, and honourables, let us point to two,—Sir Samuel Tuke and Sir William Killigrew, who may claim precedence for their comparative purity, if not for decided dramatic talent. To the former, an old colonel of the cavalier times, Charles II. recommended a comedy of Calderon's, which Sir Samuel produced at the Lincoln's Inn Fields theatre, in 1663, under the title of the "Adventures of Five Hours." The public generally, and Pepys especially, were unusually delighted with this well-constructed comedy. When it was played at Whitehall, Mrs. Pepys saw it from Lady Fox's "*pew;*" and, making an odd comparison, the diarist thought "Othello" a "mean thing," when weighed against the "Adventures;" but his chief praise is, that it is "without one word of ribaldry;" and Echard has added thereto his special commendation as a critic.

Sir Robert Stapylton says of William Killigrew what could not be said of his brother Tom (whose plays were written before the Restoration), that in him were found—

> "——— plots well laid,
> The language pure and ev'ry sentence weighed."

Sir William, a soldier of the first Charles's fighting time, a courtier, and vice-chamberlain to the Queen, in "Rowley's" days, was the author of four or five plays, one only of which deserves any notice here,—

namely, his comedy of "Pandora." The heroine of this drama, resolving to cloister herself up from marriage, allows love to be made to her in jest, and, of course, ends by becoming a wife in happy earnest. The author had, at first, made a tragedy of "Pandora." The masters of the stage objected to it in that form; and, it being all the same to the complaisant Sir William, he converted his tragedy into a comedy!

Sir Robert Stapylton, himself a Douay student converted to Protestantism; a cavalier, who turned to a hanger-on at court—but who was always a scholar and a gentleman,—has received more censure than praise at the hands of a greater critic and poet than himself. Pepys took no interest in Stapylton's "Slighted Maid," even though his own wife's maid, Gosnell, had a part in it; and Dryden has remarked of it, with too much severity, that "there is nothing in the first act that might not be said or done in the second; nor anything in the middle which might not as well have been at the beginning or the end." Stapylton, like the wits of his time, generally wrote more weakly than he spoke. This was the case, too, with Tom Killigrew, of whom Scott remarks truly, in a very awkward simile (*Life of Dryden*), that "the merit of his good things *evaporated* as soon as he attempted to *interweave* them with comedy."

But who is this jaunty personage, so noisy at a rehearsal of one of his own indifferent plays? It is "Ned Howard," one of the three sons of the dirty Earl of Berkshire, the first Howard who bore that title, and whom Pepys saw one July day of 1666,

serving the King with liquor, "in that dirty pickle I never saw man in, in my life." The daughter of this Earl was the wife of Dryden.

And what does Ned Howard say at rehearsal? The actors are making some objection to his piece; but he exclaims, "In fine,—it shall read, and write, and act, and print, and pit, box, and gallery it, egad, with any play in Europe!" The play fails; and then you may hear Ned in any coffee house, or wherever there is a company, proclaiming, by way of excuse, that "Mr. So-and-so the actor didn't *top his part, sir!*" It was Ned Howard's favourite phrase.

The old Earl of Berkshire gave three sons to literature, besides a daughter to Dryden; namely, Sir Robert, James, and this Edward. The last-named was the least effective. His characters "talk," but they are engaged in no plot; and they exhibit a dull lack of incident. The most of his six or seven dramas were failures; but from one of them, which was the most original, indecent, and the most decidedly damned, Mrs. Inchbald condescended to extract matter which she turned to very good purpose in her "Every one has his Fault." Edward Howard gratified the court-party in his tragedy of "The Usurper," by describing, under the character of Damocles the Syracusan, the once redoubted Oliver Cromwell: while Hugo de Petra but thinly veiled Hugh Peters; and Cleomenes is said to have been the shadow of General Monk. Lacy said that Ned was "more of a fool than a poet;" and Buckingham was of the same opinion.

James Howard came under Buckingham's censure

too; and an incident in the "English Monsieur," which, if Pepys's criticism may be accepted, was a mighty, pretty, witty, pleasant, mirthful comedy, furnished the satirical touch in the "Rehearsal," where Prince Volscius falls in love with Parthenope, as he is pulling on his boots to go out of town. James Howard belonged to the faction which affected to believe that there was no popular love for Shakspeare, to render whom palatable, he arranged "Romeo and Juliet" for the stage, with a double denouement—one serious, the other hilarious. If your heart were too sensitive to bear the deaths of the loving pair, you had only to go on the succeeding afternoon to see them wedded, and set upon the way of a well-assured domestic felicity!

This species of humour was not wanting in Sir Robert Howard,—who won his knighthood by valour displayed in saving Lord Wilmot's life in that hot affair at Cropredy Bridge. Sir Robert has been as much pommelled as patted by Dryden. Buckingham dragged him in effigy across the stage, and Shadwell ridiculed the universality of his pretensions by a clever caricature of him, in the "Impertinents," as Sir Positive Atall. For the King's purpose, Howard cajoled the Parliament out of money; for his own purpose, he cajoled the King out of both money and place; and netted several thousands a year by affixing his very legible signature to warrants, issued by him as Auditor of the Exchequer. The humour which he had in common with his brother James, he exhibited, by giving two opposite catastrophes to his "Vestal Virgin," between which the public were free to choose. Sir

Robert has generally been looked upon as a servile courtier; but people were astounded at the courage displayed by him in his "Great Favourite, or the Duke of Lerma;" in which the naughtiness of the King's ways, and still more that of the women about him, was shown in a light which left no doubt as to the application of the satire. His bombastic periods have died away in the echoes of them which Fielding caught in his "Tom Thumb;" but his comic power is strongly and admirably manifested in his "Committee," a transcript of Puritan life, which—applied to Quakers, for want of better subjects for caricature—may still be witnessed in country theatres, in the farce of "Honest Thieves." Like many other satirists, Sir Robert could not detect his own weak points. In his "Blind Lady," he ridicules an old widow in desperate want of a seventh husband; and at threescore and ten, he himself married buxom Mistress Dives, one of the Maids of Honour to Queen Mary.

Of comedies portraying national or individual follies, perhaps the most successful, and the most laughable, was James Howard's "English Monsieur," in which the hero-Englishman execrates everything that is connected with his country. To him an English meal is poison, and an English coat degradation. The English Monsieur once challenged a rash person who had praised an English dinner, and, says he, "I ran him through his mistaken palate, which made me think the hand of justice guided my sword." Is there a damp walk, along which the Gallo-Englishman passes—he can distinguish between the impressions previously

left there by English or French ladies,—the footsteps of the latter being of course altogether the more fairy-like. "I have seen such *bonne mine* in their footsteps, that the King of France's *mâitre de danse* could not have found fault with any one tread amongst them all. In these walks," he adds, "I find the toes of English ladies ready to tread upon one another."

Later in the play, the hero quarrels with a friend who had found fault with a "pair of French tops," worn by the former. These boots made so much noise when the wearer moved in them, that the friend's mistress could not hear a word of the love made to her. The wearer, however, justifies the noise as a fashionable French noise: "for, look you, sir, a French noise is agreeable to the ear, and therefore not unagreeable, not prejudicial to the hearing; that is to say, to a person who has seen the world." The English Monsieur, as a matter of course, loves a French lady, who rejects his suit; but to be repulsed by a French dame had something pleasant in it; "'twas a denial with a French tone of voice, so that 'twas agreeable." Ultimately, the nymph bids him a final adieu, and the not too dejected lover exclaims to a friend: "Do you see, sir, how she leaves us; she walks away with a French step!"

One word may be said here for Sir Ludovick Carlell, the old gentleman of the bows to Charles I. Like Shirley, Killigrew, and Davenant, he had written plays before the time of the Commonwealth; and he survived to write more after the Restoration. The only one, however, which he offered to the players

was a translation of "Heraclius," by Corneille; and that was returned on his hands. There is another knight, Sir Francis Fane, from whose comedy of "Love in the Dark," Mrs. Centlivre, more clever at appropriation than Mrs. Inchbald, has taken Intrigo, the man of business, and turned him into Marplot, with considerable improvements; but as Fane himself borrowed every incident, and did not trouble himself about his language, his merit is only of the smallest order. He wrote a fair masque, and in his unrepresented "Sacrifice" was little courtier enough to make his Tamerlane declare that "princes, for the most part, keep the worst company." He and Sir Robert Howard, both Tories, could, when it pleased them, tell the truth, like the plainest spoken Whig.

More successful than Sir Francis was rollicking Tom Porter, or Major Porter, according to his military rank. Both were luckless gentlemen; but Tom wrote one play, the "Villain," which put the town in a flame, and raised Sandford's fame, as an actor, to its very highest. Tom was also the author of a rattling comedy, called the "Carnival," but rioting, and bad company and hot temper marred him. He and Sir Henry Bellasys, dining at Sir Robert Carr's, fell into fierce dispute, out of mutual error; fierce words, then a thoughtless blow from Sir Henry, then swords crossing, and tipsy people parting the combatants. They were really warm friends; but Tom had been struck, and honour forbade that he should be reconciled till blood had flown. So Dryden's boy was employed to track Bellasys, and the Major came upon him in

Covent Garden, where they fought, surrounded by a crowd of admirers. Tom's honour was satisfied by passing his sword through the body of his dearest friend. The knight felt the wound was mortal, but he beckoned the less grievously wounded major to him, kissed him, and remained standing, that Tom might not be obstructed in his flight. The friend and poet safe, the knight fell back, and soon after died. There was really noble stuff in some of these dissolute fine gentlemen! But there are no two of them who have so faithfully illustrated themselves, and the times in which they lived, as Sir George Etherege and Sir Charles Sedley; the former, a knight by purchase, in order to please a silly woman, who vowed she would marry none but a man of title; the latter, a baronet by inheritance. Sir George, born in 1636, was the descendant of a good—Sir Charles, born three years later, a member of a better—family, reckoning among its sons scholars and patrons of scholars. Sir George left Cambridge undistinguished, but took his degree in foreign travel, came home to find the study of the law too base a drudgery for so free a spirit, and so took to living like a "gentleman," and to illustrating the devilishness of that career by reproducing it in dramas on the stage.

Sedley left Oxford as Etherege left Cambridge, ingloriously, bearing no honours with him. Unlike Sir George, however, he was a home-keeping youth, whereby his wit seems not to have suffered. He nursed the latter in the groves, or at the paternal hearth at Aylesford, in Kent, till the sun of the restored monarchy

enticed him to London. There his wit recommended him to the King, won for him the hatred of small minds, and elicited the praise of noble spirits, who were witty themselves, and loved the manifestation of wit in others. "I have heard," says honest, brilliant, and much-abused Shadwell, "I have heard Sedley speak more wit at a supper than all my adversaries, putting their heads together, could *write* in a year." This testimony was rendered by a man whose own reputation as a wit has the stamp and the warrant of Rochester.

Two more atrocious libertines than these two men were not to be found in the apartments at Whitehall, or in the streets, taverns, and dens of London. Yet both were famed for like external qualities. Etherege was easy and graceful, Sedley so refinedly seductive of manner that Buckingham called it "witchcraft," and Wilmot "his prevailing, gentle art." *I*, humbler witness, can only say, after studying their works and their lives, that Etherege was a more accomplished comedy-writer than Sedley, but that Sedley was a greater *beast* than Etherege.

These two handsome fellows, made in God's image, marred their manly beauty by their licentiousness, and soon looked more like two battered, wine-soaked demons, than the sons of Christian mothers. Etherege, however, fierce and vindictive as he could be under passion, was never so utterly brutalised in mind as Sedley, nor so cruel in his humours at any time. If Sedley got up that groundless quarrel with Sheldon, Archbishop of Canterbury, the alleged cause of which

was some painted hussey, it was doubtless out of the very ferocity of his fun, which he thought well spent on exhibiting the prelate as sharing in the vices common at court.

Etherege, perhaps, had the stronger head of the two; he, at all events, kept it sufficiently free to be able to represent his King on more than one small diplomatic mission abroad. Sedley, who was nevertheless the longer liver of the two, indulged in excesses which, from their inexpressible infamy, betray a sort of insanity. When he, with other blackguards of good blood, was brought to trial for public outrages, which disgusted even the hideous wretches that lurked about Covent Garden, Chief Justice Foster addressed him from the bench with a "Sirrah!" and told him, while the reminiscence of the plague and the smoke of the Great Fire still hung over the court, that it was such wretches as he that brought God's wrath so heavily upon the kingdom. But neither the heavy fine of 2000 marks, nor his imprisonment, nor his being bound over to keep the peace for three years, nor his own conscience, nor the rebuke of wise men, could restrain this miscreant. He was not yet free from his bond[1] when he, and Buckhurst and others were carried off to the watch-house by the night-constables for fighting in the streets, drunk, as was their custom, and as naked as their drawn swords. On this occasion, in 1668, the King interfered in their favour, and Chief Justice Keeling, servile betrayer of his trust, let them go scatheless; but he

[1] The Bond was entered into in 1663.

punished the constables by whom they had been arrested!

Etherege contributed three comedies to the stage:—"The Comical Revenge, or Love in a Tub," "She Would if She Could," and the "Man of Mode, or Sir Fopling Flutter." Sedley wrote the "Mulberry Garden;" a tragedy, called "Antony and Cleopatra," wherein a single incident in Shakspeare's play is spun out into five acts; "Bellamira," in which comedy, partly founded on the "Eunuchus" of Terence, he exhibited the frailty of Lady Castlemaine, and the audacity of Churchill—a translated drama from the French, called the "Grumbler," and a tragedy, entitled the "Tyrant King of Crete." Of all Sedley's pieces, the best is the "Mulberry Garden,"[1] for portions of which the author is indebted to Molière's "Ecole des Maris," and on which Pepys's criticism is not to be gainsayed:—"Here and there a pretty saying, and that not very many either." "Bellamira" is remembered only as the play, during the first representation of which the roof of the Theatre Royal fell in, with such just discrimination as to injure no one but the author. Sir Fleetwood Shepherd said that "the wit of the latter had blown the roof from the building." "Not so," rejoined Sedley, "the heaviness of the play has broke down the house, and buried the author in the ruins!"

Etherege's comedies were, in their day, the dear delight of the majority of playgoers. I say the majority; for though "Love in a Tub" brought £1000 profit to Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre, in a single

[1] Genest says that "Bellamira" is by far the best of Sedley's plays.

month of 1664, and was acted before enraptured gallants and appreciating nymphs, at Whitehall, some found it a silly play. It gave Etherege a name and a position; and when his next comedy appeared, "She Would if She Could," a thousand anxious people, with leisure enough of an afternoon to see plays (it was only at Court that they were acted at night), were turned away from the doors. To me, this piece is very distasteful, and it is not without satisfaction I read that it was on the first night "barbarously treated," according to Dennis, and that Pepys found "nothing in the world good in it, and few people pleased with it." The plot and denouement he pronounces as "mighty insipid;" yet he says of the piece as a whole, that it was "dull, roguish, and witty." The actors, however, were not perfect on the first night. Dennis praised the truth of character, the purity, freedom, and grace of the dialogue; and Shadwell declared that it was the best comedy since the Restoration, to his own time. All this eulogy is not to be accepted. Etherege's third comedy, the "Man of Mode," has been described as "perhaps the most elegant comedy, and containing more of the real *manners* of high life than any one the English stage was ever adorned with." In the latter respect alone is this description true; but, though the piece is dedicated to a lady, the Duchess of York, it could have afforded pleasure, as the *Spectator* remarks, only to the impure. People, no doubt, were delighted to recognise Rochester in Dorimant, Etherege himself in Bellair, and the stupendous ass, Beau Hewitt, in

Sir Fopling; but it must have been a weary delight; so debased is the nature of these people, however truly they represent, as they unquestionably did, the manners, bearing, and language of the higher classes.

How they dressed, talked, and thought; what they did, and how they did it; what they hoped for, and how they pursued it; all this, and many other exemplifications of life as it was then understood, may be found especially in the plays of Etherege, in which there is a bustle and a succession of incidents, from the rise to the fall of the curtain. But the fine gentlemen are such unmitigated rascals, and the women —girls and matrons— are such unlovely hussies, in rascality and unseemliness quite a match for the men, that one escapes from their wretched society, and a knowledge of their one object, and the confidences of the abominable creatures engaged therein, with a feeling of a strong want of purification, and of that ounce of civet which sweetens the imagination.

Of the remaining amateur writers there is not much to be said. Rhodes was a gentleman's son without an estate, a doctor without practice, and a dramatist without perseverance. His one comedy, "Flora's Vagaries" (1667), gave a capital part to Nelly, and a reputation to the doctor, which he failed to sustain. Corye was another idle gentleman, who, in the same year,[1] produced his "Generous Enemies," and that piece was a plagiarism. Ned Revet also exhausted himself in one comedy, "The Town Shifts," which the town found insipid. Arrowsmith was in like

[1] Should be 1671.

plight, and his sole comedy, "The Reformation," was obliged to give way to Shakspeare's "Macbeth," converted into an opera. Nevil Payne was the author of three pieces—"Fatal Jealousy," in which Nokes earned his name of *Nurse Nokes;* the "Morning Ramble," which was less attractive in 1673, than the "Tempest," even in an operatic form, or "Hamlet," with Betterton for the hero; and the "Siege of Constantinople," a tragedy, in which Shaftesbury and his vices were mercilessly satirised. Tom Rawlins wrote three poor plays, the last in 1678, and he had as great a contempt for the character of author as Congreve himself. He was, like Joe Harris, "engraver of the Mint," kept fellowship with wits and poets, wrote for amusement, and "had no desire to be known by a *thread*bare coat, having a calling that will maintain it *woolly!*" Then there was Leanard, who stole not more audaciously than he was stolen from, when he chose to be original—Colley Cibber having taken many a point from the "Counterfeits," to enrich "She Would and She Would Not." Pordage was about as dull a writer as might be expected of a man who was land-steward to "the memorable simpleton," Philip, Earl of Pembroke. Shipman enjoys the fame of having been highly esteemed by Cowley—he certainly was not by the public; and Bancroft, the surgeon, had the reputation of having been induced to write, as he did, unsuccessfully, for the stage, because he prescribed for, or rather against, the most fashionable malady of the day, when it attacked theatre-haunting fops and actors who stooped to

imitate the gentlemen. From these he caught the stage fever, and suffered considerably. Whitaker's one play, "The Conspiracy," is remarkable for the sensation incident of a ghost appearing, leading Death by the hand! Maidwell's comedy of "The Loving Enemies" (the author was an old schoolmaster), was noticeable for being "designedly dull, lest by satirising folly the author might bring upon his skull the bludgeon of fools." [1] Saunders, and his "Tamerlane the Great," are now forgotten; but Dryden spoke of the author, in an indecent epilogue, as "the first boy-poet of our age;" who, however, though he blossomed as early as Cowley, did not flourish as long.

Wilson was another professional writer, but less successful on the stage than in his recordership of Londonderry. Another lawyer, Higden, was one of the jolliest of fellows; and wishing the actors to be so too, he introduced so many drinking scenes into his sole play, "The Wary Widow," that the players, who tippled their real punch freely, were all drunk by the end of the third act; and the piece was then, there, and thereby, brought to an end!

In the last years of the seventeenth century, a humble votary of the muses appeared in Duffet, the Exchange milliner; and in Robert Gould, a servant in the household of Dorset, where he caught from the wits and gay fellows assembled at Knowle or at Buckhurst, a desire to write a drama. He was, however, a schoolmaster, when his play of the "Rival

[1] This is, of course, satirically said by the author.

Sisters"—in which, other means of slaughter being exhausted, a thunderbolt is employed for the killing a lady—was but coldly received. Gould was not a plagiarist, like Scott, the Duke of Roxburgh's secretary, nor so licentious. The public was scandalised by incidents in Scott's "Unhappy Kindness," in 1697. Dr. Drake was another plagiarist, who revenged himself in the last-named year, for the condemnation of his "Sham Lawyer," by stating on the title-page that it had been "damnably acted." That year was fatal, too, to Dr. Filmer, the champion of the stage against Collier. Even Betterton and Mrs. Barry failed to give life to the old gentleman's "Unnatural Brother;" and the doctor ascribed his want of success to the fact, that never at any one time had he placed more than three characters on the stage! The most prolific of what may be termed the amateur writers, was Peter Motteux, a French Huguenot, whom the revocation of the Edict of Nantes brought, in 1660,[1] to England, where he carried on the vocations of a trader in Leadenhall Street, clerk in the foreign department of the Post Office, translator, original writer, dramatist, and "fast man," till the too zealous pursuit of the latter calling found Peter dead, in very bad company, in St. Clements Danes, in the year 1718. Of his seventeen comedies, farces, and musical interludes, there is nothing to be said, save that one called "Novelty" presents a distinct play in each act,—or five different pieces in all. By different men, Peter

[1] The Edict of Nantes was not revoked till 1685. Motteux was born in 1660.

has been diversely rated. Dryden said of him, in reference to his one tragedy, "Beauty in Distress:"

> "Thy incidents, perhaps, too thick are sown;
> But too much plenty is thy fault alone:
> At least but two in that good crime commit;—
> Thou in design, and Wycherly in wit."

But an anonymous poet writes, in reference to one of his various poor adaptations, "The Island Princess:"

> "Motteux and Durfey are for nothing fit,
> But to supply with songs their *want* of wit."

How Motteux found time for all his pursuits is not to be explained; but, much as he accomplished in all, he designed still more—one of his projects being an opera, to be called "The Loves of Europe," in which were to be represented the methods employed in various nations, whereby ladies' hearts are triumphantly won. It was an odd idea; but Peter Motteux was odd in everything. And it is even oddly said of him, "that he met with his fate in trying a very odd experiment, highly disgraceful to his memory!"[1]

Hard-drinking, and what was euphoniously called *gallantry*, killed good-tempered Charles Hopkins, son of the Bishop of Londonderry. Had he had more discretion and less wit, he might have prospered. His tragedies, "Pyrrhus," "Boadicea," and "Friendship improved," bear traces of what he might have done. He has the merit, however, of not being indecent,—a fact which the epilogue to "Boadicea," furnished

[1] *Biographia Dramatica.*

by a friend and spoken by a lady, rather deplores, and in indecent language, regrets that uncleanness of jest is no longer acceptable to the town!

Walker merits notice, less for his two pieces, "Victorious Love," and "Marry or do worse," than for the fact that this young Barbadian was the first actor whom Eton school gave to the stage. He appeared, when only eighteen, in the first-named piece, but quickly passed away to the study of the law and the exercise of the latter as a profession, in his native island. I know nothing worthy of record of the few other gentlemen who wrote plays, rather as a relaxation than a vocation, save that Boyer, a refugee Huguenot, like Motteux, and a learned man, adapted Racine's "Iphigenia in Aulis," for representation; that Oldmixon was an old, unscrupulous, party-writer; and that Crauford was historiographer for Scotland to Queen Anne, and has left no name of note among dramatic writers.

SIR WILLIAM DAVENANT.

CHAPTER X.

PROFESSIONAL AUTHORS.

The men who took up dramatic authorship seriously as a vocation, during the last half of the seventeenth century, amount to something more than two dozen. They begin with Davenant and Dryden; include Tate and Brady,[1] Lee and Otway, Wycherley, Congreve, Cibber, and Vanbrugh; and conclude with Farquhar, and with Rowe.

I include Sir John Vanbrugh because he preferred fame as an author to fame as an architect, and I insert Congreve, despite the reflection that the ghost of that

[1] Brady was in no sense a professional dramatic author.

writer would daintily protest against it if he could. When Voltaire called upon him, in London, the Frenchman intimated that his visit was to the "author." "I am a *gentleman*," said Congreve. "Nay," rejoined the former, "had you been only a gentleman, you would never have received a visit from me at all."

Let me here repeat the names:—*Davenant*, *Dryden*, Shirley, Lee, Cowley, *Shadwell*, Flecknoe, Settle, Crowne, Ravenscroft, Wycherley, Otway, Durfey, Banks, Rymer, *Tate*, Brady, Southerne, Congreve, *Cibber*, Dilke,[1] Vanbrugh, Gildon, Farquhar, Dennis, and *Rowe*. The half dozen in italics were poets-laureate.

All of them were sons of "gentlemen," save three, Davenant, Cowley, and Dennis, whose sires were, respectively, a vintner, a hatter,[2] and a saddler. The sons, however, received a collegiate education. Cowley distinguished himself at Cambridge, but Davenant left Oxford without a degree, and from the former University Dennis was expelled, in March 1680, "for assaulting and wounding Sir Glenham with a sword."

Besides Cowley and Dennis, we are indebted to Cambridge for Dryden, Lee, and Rymer. From Oxford University came Davenant, and Settle, degreeless as Davenant, with Shirley, whose mole on his cheek had rendered him ineligible in Laud's eyes, for ordination; Wycherley, Otway, Southerne, and Dilke. Dublin University yielded Tate and Brady; and better fruit

[1] I doubt if Dilke is correctly included in this category.
[2] A grocer. (Johnson's *Lives of the Poets.*)

still, Southerne,[1] Congreve, who went to Ireland at an early age, and Farquhar. Douay gave us Gildon, and we are not proud of the gift.

Lee, Otway, and Tate were sons of clergymen. Little Crowne's father was an Independent minister in Nova Scotia, and Crowne himself laid claim, fruitlessly, to a vast portion of the territory there—unjustly made over by the English Government to the French. Cibber was an artist, on the side of his father the statuary, and a "gentleman" by his mother.

It may be said of a good number of these gentlemen that idleness and love of pleasure made them dramatic poets. Shadwell, Ravenscroft, Wycherley, Durfey, Bankes, Southerne, Congreve, and Rowe, were all apprenticed to the law; but the study was one too dull for men of their vivacious temperament, and they all turned from it in disgust. According to their success, so were they praised or blamed.

The least successful dramatists on the above list were the most presumptuous of critics. Rymer, who was wise enough to stick to the law while he endeavoured to turn at least Melpomene to good account, tried to persuade the public that Shakspeare was even of less merit than it was the fashion to assign to him. In 1678,[2] Rymer boldly asserted that "in the neighing of a horse as the growling of a mastiff, there is a meaning; there is as lively expression and, may I say, more humanity than many times in the tragical

[1] Southerne is said to have been at Oxford and Dublin Universities.

[2] This is a quotation from Rymer's second work, "A Short View of Tragedy," published in 1693.

flights of Shakspeare." He says, that "no woman bred out of a pigstye could talk so meanly as Desdemona," in that tragedy which Rymer calls "a bloody farce without salt or savour." Of Brutus and Cæsar, he says Shakspeare has depicted them as "Jack Puddins." To show how much better he understood the art, Rymer published, in 1678, the tragedy he could not get represented, "Edgar, or the English Monarch." He professes to imitate the ancients, and his tragedy is in rhyme; he accuses Shakspeare of anachronisms, and his Saxon princess is directed to "pull off her patches!" The author was ambitious enough to attempt to supersede Shakspeare, and he pooh-poohed John Milton by speaking of *Paradise Lost* as "a thing which some people were pleased to call a poem."

Dennis was not quite so audacious as this. He was a better critic than the author of the *Fœdera*, and a more voluminous writer, or rather adapter, of dramatic pieces. He spoke, however, of Tasso as compassionately as the village-painter did of Titian; but his usefulness was acknowledged by the commentator, who remarked that men might construct good plays by following his precepts and avoiding his examples. Boyer has said something similar of Gildon, who was a critic as well as dramatist—namely, "he wrote an *English Art of Poetry*, which he had practised himself very unsuccessfully in his dramatic performances."

Cowley, although he is now little remembered as a dramatic writer, was among the first who seized the earliest opportunity after the Restoration to set up as playwrights; but Cowley failed, and was certainly

mortified at his failure. He re-trimmed a play of his early days, the "Guardian," and called it the "Cutter of Coleman Street." All there is broad farce, in which the Puritan "congregation of the spotless" is coarsely ridiculed, and cavalierism held up to admiration. The audience condemned the former as "profane," and Cowley's cavaliers were found to be such scamps that he was suspected of disloyalty. Gentle as he was by nature, Cowley was irritable under criticism. "I think there was something of faction against it," he says, "by the early appearance of some men's disapprobation before they had seen enough of it to build their dislike upon their judgment." "Profane!" exclaims Abraham, with a shudder, and declares it is enough to "knock a man down." Is it profane, he asks, "to deride the hypocrisy of those men whose skulls are not yet bare upon the gates since the public and just punishment of it," namely, profanity. Thus were the skulls of the Commonwealth leaders tossed up in comedy. He adds, in a half saucy, half deprecatory sort of way, that "there is no writer but may fail sometimes in point of wit, and it is no less frequent for the auditors to fail in point of judgment." Nevertheless, he had humbly asked favour at the hands of the critics when his piece was first played, in these words:—

"Gentlemen critics of Argier,
For your own int'rest, I'd advise ye here
To let this little forlorn hope go by
Safe and untouch'd. 'That must not be!' you'll cry.
If ye be wise, it must: I'll tell ye why.
There are 7, 8, 9,—stay, there are behind
Ten plays at least, which wait but for a wind
And the glad news that we the enemy miss;
And those are all your own, if you spare this.

> Some are but new-trimm'd up, others quite new,
> Some by known shipwrights built, and others too
> By that great author made, whoe'er he be,
> That styles himself 'Person of Quality.'"

The "Cutter" rallied a little, and then was laid aside; but some of its spars were carried off by later gentlemen, who have piqued themselves on their originality. Colonel Jolly's advice to the bully, Cutter, if he would not be known, to "take one more disguise at last, and put thyself in the habit of a gentleman," has been quoted as the wit of Sheridan, who took his Sir Anthony Absolute from Truman, *senior*. And when Cowley made Aurelia answer to the inquiry, if she had looked in Lucia's eye, that she had, and that "there were pretty babies in it," he little thought that there would rise a Tom Moore to give a turn to the pretty idea, and spoil it, as he has done, in the "Impromptu," in *Little's Poems*.

One of the most remarkable circumstances in Cowley's character, considering how he distinguished himself at college, is, that he never thoroughly understood the rules of grammar! and that in seriously setting up for a dramatic author, he took, like Dryden, the course in which he acquired the least honour. When Charles II., on hearing of Cowley's death, declared that he had not left a better man behind him in England, the King was, assuredly, not thinking of the poet as a dramatist.

Several of Cowley's contemporaries who were considered better men by some judges, were guilty of offence from which he was entirely free. That offence

consisted in their various attempts to improve Shakspeare, by lowering him to what they conceived to be the taste of the times. Davenant took "Measure for Measure," and "Much Ado about Nothing," and manipulated them into one absurd comedy, the "Law against Lovers." He subsequently *improved* "Macbeth" and "Julius Cæsar;"[1] and Dryden, who with at least some show of reason, re-arranged "Troilus and Cressida," united with Davenant in a sacrilegious destruction of all that was beautiful in the "Tempest." Nat Lee, who was accounted mad, had at least sense enough to refrain from marring Shakspeare. Shadwell corrected the great poet's view of "Timon of Athens," which, as he not too modestly observed, he "made into a play;" but, with more modesty in the epilogue, he asked for forgiveness for his own part, for the sake of the portion that was Shakspeare's. Crowne, more impudently, remodelled two parts of "Henry VI.," with some affectation of reverence for the original author, and a bold assertion of his own original merits with regard to some portions of the play. Crowne's originality is shown, in making Clifford swear like a drunken tapster, and in affirming that a king is a king—sacred, and not to be even *thought* ill of, let him be never so hateful a miscreant. Ravenscroft, in *his* "Titus Andronicus," only piled the agony a little more solidly and comically, and can be hardly said to have thereby molested Shakspeare. There was less excuse for Otway, who, not caring to do as he pleased with a doubtful play, ruthlessly seized "Romeo and

[1] Whether Davenant altered "Julius Cæsar" is somewhat doubtful.

Juliet," stripped the lovers of their romance, clapped them into a classical costume, and converted the noble but obstinate houses of Capulet and Montagu into riotous followers of Marius and Sylla—Caius Marius the younger wishing he were a glove upon the hand of Lavinia Metella, and a sententious Sulpitius striving in vain to be as light and sparkling as Mercutio. Tate's double rebuke to Shakspeare, in altering his "King Lear" and "Coriolanus," was a small offence compared with Otway's assault. He undertook, as he says, to "rectify what was wanting;" and accordingly, he abolishes the faithful fool, makes a pair of silly lovers of Edgar and Cordelia, and converts the solemn climax into comedy, by presenting the old king and his matchless daughter, hand in hand, alive and merry, as the curtain descends. Tate smirkingly maintained, that he wrought into perfection the rough and costly material left by Shakspeare. "In my humble opinion," said Addison, "it has lost half its beauty;" and yet Tate's version kept its place for many years!—though not so long as Cibber's version of "Richard III.," which was constructed out of Shakspeare, with more regard for the actor than respect for the author.

In the last year of the century, the last attempt to improve that inefficient poet was made by Gildon, who produced at Lincoln's Inn Fields *his* idea of what "Measure for Measure" should be, by omitting all the comic characters, introducing music and dancing, transposing incidents, adding much nonsense of his own to that of Davenant, and sprinkling all with an

assortment of blunders, amusing enough to make some compensation for the absence of the comic characters in the original play.

It seemed to be the idea of these men, that it were wise to reduce Shakspeare to the capacities of those who could appreciate him. There *were* unhappy persons thus afflicted. Even Mr. Pepys speaks of "Henry VIII." as "a simple thing, made up of a great many patches." The "Tempest," he thinks, "has no great wit—but yet good, above ordinary plays." "Othello" was to him "a mean thing," compared with the last new comedy by another author. "Twelfth Night," "one of the weakest plays I ever saw on the stage." "Macbeth," he liked or disliked, according to the humour of the hour; but there was a "divertissement" in it, which struck him as being a droll thing in tragedy, but in this case proper and natural! Finally, he records, in 1662, of the "Midsummer's Night's Dream," which he "had never seen before, nor ever shall again," that "it is the most insipid, ridiculous play, that ever I saw in my life."

Of the characteristics of the chief of these dramatists, it may be said, first of Davenant, that, if he was quick of fancy and careful in composition, the result is not answerable to the labour expended on it. One of the pleasantest features about Dryden was, that as he grew old he increased in power; but his heart was untouched by his own magic, and he was but a cold reader of the best of his own works. Lee, as tender and impassioned as he is often absurd and bombastic, was an exquisite reader of what he wrote, his heart

acknowledging the charm. Shadwell's characters have the merit of being well conceived, and strongly marked; and Shirley (a poet belonging to an earlier period), has only a little above the measure of honour due to him, when he is placed on a level with Fletcher. Crowne is more justly placed in the third rank of dramatists; but he had originality, lacking the power to give it effect. Ravenscroft had neither invention nor expression; yet he was a most prolific writer, a caricaturist, but without truth or refinement; altogether unclean. Wycherley, on the other hand, was admirable for the epigrammatic turn of his stage conversations, the aptness of his illustrations, the acuteness of his observation, the richness of his character-painting, and the smartness of his satire; in the indulgence or practice of all which, however, the action of the drama is often impeded, that the audience may enjoy a shower of sky rockets.

Pope said that Wycherley was inspired by the Muses, with the wit of Plautus. He had, indeed, "Plautus' wit," and an obscenity rivalling that of the "Curculio;" but he had none of the pathos which is to be found in the "Rudens." But Wycherley was also described as having the "art of Terence and Menander's fire." If by the first, Pope meant skill in invention of plot, Wycherley surpassed the Carthaginian; and as to "Menander's fire," in Wycherley it was no purifying fire; and Wesley was not likely to illustrate a sermon by a quotation from Wycherley, as St. Paul did by citing a line from Menander.

We are charmed by the humour of Wycherley; but

after that, posterity disagrees with Pope's verdict. We are *not* instructed by the sense of Wycherley, nor swayed by his judgment, nor warmed honestly by his spirit; his unblushing profligacy ruins all. But if his men and women are as coarse as Etherege's or Sedley's, they are infinitely more clever people; so clever, indeed, that Sheridan has not been too proud to borrow "good things" from some of them. Wycherley is perhaps more natural and consistent than Congreve, whose Jeremy speaks like an oracle, and is as learned, though not so nasty as his master. It may be, that for a man to enjoy Congreve's wit, he should be as witty as Congreve. To me, it seems to shine at best but as a brilliant on a dirty finger. As for his boasted originality, Valentine and Trapbois are Don Juan and M. Dimanche; and as for Valentine, as the type of a gentleman, his similes smack more of the stable-yard than the drawing-room; and there is more of impertinent prattle generally among his characters than among those of Wycherley. His ladies are a shade more elegant than those of the latter poet; but they are mere courtezans, brilliant, through being decked with diamonds; but not a jot the more virtuous or attractive on that account. Among the comedy-writers of this half century, however, Congreve and Wycherley stand supreme; they were artists; too many of their rivals or successors were but coarse daubers.

In coarseness of sentiment the latter could not go beyond their prototypes; and in the expression of it, they had neither the wit of their greatest, nor the

smartness of their less famous masters. This coarseness dates, however, from earlier days than those of the Restoration; and Dryden, who remembered the immorality of Webster's comedies, seems to have thought that the Restoration was to give the old grossness to the stage, as well as a new king to the country. It is, nevertheless, certain, that a large portion of the public protested against this return to an evil practice, and hissed his first piece, "The Wild Gallant," played in the little theatre in Vere Street, Drury Lane, in 1662. "It was not indecent enough for them," said the poet, who promised "not to offend in the way of modesty again." His "Kind Keeper, or Mr. Limberham," under which name the Duke of Lauderdale is said to have been satirised, and which Dryden held to be his best comedy, was utterly condemned. "Ah!" said he, "it was damned by a cabal of keepers!" It never occurred to him that the public might prefer wit to immorality. Long before, he had written an unseemly piece, called "The Rival Ladies;" he seasoned it in what he maintained was the taste of the town, and in a prologue—prologues then were often savagely defiant of the opinions of the audience, asserted his own judgment by saying:—

> "He's bound to please, not to write well, and knows
> There is a mode in plays as well as clothes."

I do not know how true it may be that Dryden, the coarsest of dramatic writers, was "the modestest of men in conversation;" but I have small trust in the alleged purity of a writer who stooped to gratify

the baser feelings of an audience, according to their various degrees; who could compose for one class the filthy dish served up in his "Wild Gallant," and for another the more dangerous, if more refined, fare for youthful palates, so carefully manipulated in the Alexis and Cælia song, in his "Mariage à la Mode."

We must not forget, indeed, that the standard of morals was different at that time from what it is now. Later in the half century, Jeremy Collier especially attacked Congreve and Wycherley, as men who applied their natural gifts to corrupt instead of purify the stage. The public too were scandalised at passages in Congreve's "Double Dealer," a comedy of which the author said "the mechanical part was perfect."[1] The play was not a success, and the fault was laid to its gross inuendoes, and its plainer indecency. "I declare," says the author, in the preface, "that I took a particular care to avoid it, and if they find any, it is of their own making, for I did not design it to be so understood."

This point, on which the author and the public were at issue, proves that on the part of the latter the standard was improving—for Congreve is deep in the mire before the first scene is over. He had looked for censure for other offence, and says in his usual lofty manner with the critics:—"I would not have anybody imagine that I think this play without its faults, for I am conscious of several, and ready to own 'em; but it shall be to those who are able to find 'em out." This is not ill said. For the critics there was

[1] Congreve (ed. 1774) merely says that it was *regular*.

at least as much contempt as fear. In "The Country Wife," Wycherley speaks of "the most impudent of creatures, an ill poet, or what is yet more impudent, a second-hand critic!" The less distinguished writers were, of course, severer still against the critics.

In later years, Sheridan expressed the greatest contempt for such part of the public as found that the grossness of Congreve was not compensated for by his wit. Sheridan avowed that Congreve must be played unmutilated or be shelved. He compared his great predecessor to a horse whose vice is cured at the expense of his vigour.

Sheridan must, nevertheless, have felt that he was in error with regard to these old authors. In his "Trip to Scarborough," which is an entire recasting of Vanbrugh's "Relapse," he makes Loveless (Smith) say, "It would surely be a pity to exclude the productions of some of our best writers for want of a little wholesome pruning, which might be effected by any one who possessed modesty enough to believe that we should preserve all we can of our deceased authors, at least, till they are outdone by the living ones."

Dryden said of Congreve's "Double Dealer," that though it was censured by the greater part of the town, it was approved of by those best qualified to judge. The people who had a sense of decency were derided by Dryden; they were angry, he insinuated, only because the satire touched them nearly. Applying the grossest terms to women, in a letter to Walsh, he protests that they are incensed because Congreve

exposes their vices, and that the gallants are equally enraged because their vices, too, are exposed; but even if it were true that Congreve copied from nature, it is also true that he laughs *with* his vicious and brilliant bad men and women, makes a joke of vice, and never attempts to correct it.

Dryden, as an erst Westminster boy and Cambridge man, may have felt some annoyance on the exposure of his false quantity in the penultimate of "Cleomenes," but to a pert coffee-house fop, who presumed to review his tragedy of that name, he could deliver a crushing reply. In that play Cleomenes virtuously resists the blandishments of Cassandra. "Had I been left alone with a young beauty," said a stripling critic to glorious John, "I would not have spent my time like your Spartan." "That, sir," said Dryden, "perhaps is true; but give me leave to tell you, you are no hero!" Good as this is, Lee said even a better thing to the coxcomb who visited him in Bedlam, during Lee's four years sojourn there. "It is an easy thing," observed this fellow, "to write like a madman." "No," answered Lee, "it is not an easy thing to write like a madman; but it is very easy to write like a fool."

Dryden, however, could criticise himself with justness. He confessed that he was not qualified to write comedies. He saw, too, the defects in his tragedies. He was ashamed of his "Tyrannic Love," and laughed at the rant and fustian of his Maximin. He allowed that in his "Conquest of Granada" the sublimity burst into burlesque, and he could censure the extravagance of Almanzor as freely as he did the bombast of Maxi-

min. Still he was uneasy under censure; he was disappointed at the reception given to his "Assignation," and complained bitterly of the critics, especially of Settle. His best defender was Charles II. Some courtiers ventured to wonder at the King going so often to see "The Spanish Friar," as the piece was a wholesale robbery. "Odds fish!" exclaimed Charles, "select me another such a comedy,[1] and I'll go and see it as often as I do 'The Spanish Friar.'" "All for Love" is Dryden's most carefully written play, and the author repeatedly declared that the scene in Act I., between Anthony and Ventidius, was superior to anything he had ever composed.

Dryden attributed whatever merit he had as a writer of prose to having studied the works of Tillotson, and the prelate, it will be remembered, owed some of his graces of delivery to Betterton. In his comedies, Dryden was the encourager, not the scourger of vice; and yet he could warmly approve the purity of Southerne, when Southerne chose to be pure, and acknowledge that it were as politic to silence vicious poets as seditious preachers. If there were few good poets in his day, Dryden sees the cause in the turbulence of the times; and if people loved the stilted nonsense of heroic tragedies, it was simply, he says, because "the fashion was set them by the court." To court-protection, he himself owed much, and he states what one may smile at now, that the King's kindness, in calling the "Maiden Queen" *his* play,—that singular piece, in which there are eight women

[1] "*Steal* me another such."

and three men, saved the drama from the malice of the poet's enemies. There is no such privilege for poets in our days!

Had Shadwell, who left the law to find a livelihood by literature, not been a Whig, we should have heard less of him in parallels or contrasts with Dryden. Of his dramatic pieces, amounting to about a dozen and a half, there is scarcely one that does not please more in perusal than any by the poet of the greater name,—always excepting Dryden's "Love for Love." Shadwell's "Squire of Alsatia," "Bury Fair," "Epsom Wells," and some others, were necessarily favourites with *his* public, as they are good character comedies, brisk with movement and incident. For attacking Dryden's "Duke of Guise," Dryden pilloried the assailant for ever, as "Mac Flecnoe;" but when he says that "Shadwell never deviates into sense," he has as little foundation for his assertion as he has for his contempt of Wilmot, when he says in the *Essay upon Satire*, "Rochester I despise for want of wit." Rochester may have praised Shadwell because he hated Dryden; but Dryden's aspersions on the other two spring decidedly more from his passion than his judgment. To Shadwell was given the laureateship of which Dryden was deprived. The latter would have borne the deprivation better if the laurel-crown had fallen on another head, as he sings to Congreve:

> "Oh that your brows my laurel had sustained;
> Well had I been depos'd, if you had reigned!"

In one respect, Dryden was no match at all for Shadwell; and, indeed, he has, inadvertently, con-

fessed as much. When speaking of his incapacity for writing comedy, he says, "I want that gaiety of humour which is required in it; my conversation slow and dull; my humour saturnine and reserved. In short, I am none of those who endeavour to break jests in company, and endeavour to make repartees; so that those who decry my comedies do me no injury, except it be in point of profit; reputation in them is the last thing to which I shall pretend." This is the picture of a dull man, of which Shadwell, whose comedies, to say the least of them, have as much merit as Dryden's, was the exact opposite. He was a most brilliant talker; and Rochester remarked of him that even had Shadwell burnt all he wrote, and only printed all he spoke, his wit and humour would be found to exceed that of any other poet.

We come, however, to a greater than Shadwell, in Sir John Vanbrugh, who belongs to two centuries, and who was a man of many occupations, but a dramatist by predilection. He was architect, poet, wit, herald; he stole some of his plots; and he sold his office of Clarencieux, to which he had been appointed, *because* he was a successful playwright. He had humour, and was exceedingly coarse; but, says Schlegel, "under Queen Anne, manners became again more decorous; and this may be easily traced in the comedies. In the series of English comic poets, Wycherley, Congreve, Farquhar, Vanbrugh, Steele, Cibber, &c., we may perceive something like a gradation from the most unblushing indecency to a tolerable degree of modesty." This, however, is only

partly true; and Schlegel himself remarks in the same page, "that after all we know of the licentiousness of manners under Charles II., we are still lost in astonishment at the audacious ribaldry of Wycherley and Congreve."

Of Vanbrugh's ten or eleven plays, that which has longest kept the stage is the "Relapse," still acted, in its altered form, by Sheridan, as the "Trip to Scarborough." This piece was produced at the Theatre de l'Odeon, in Paris, in the spring of 1862, as a posthumous comedy of Voltaire's! It was called the "Comte de Boursoufle," and had a "run." The story ran with it that Voltaire had composed it in his younger days for private representation, that it had been more than once played in the houses of his noble friends, under various titles, that he had then locked it up, and that the manuscript had only recently been discovered by the lucky individual who persuaded the manager of the Odeon to produce it on his stage! The bait took. All the French theatrical world in the capital flocked to the Faubourg St. Germain to witness a new play by Voltaire. Critics examined the plot, philosophised on its humour, applauded its absurdities, enjoyed its wit, and congratulated themselves on the circumstance that the Voltairean wit especially was as enjoyable then as in the preceding century! Of the authorship they had no doubt whatever; for, said they, if Voltaire did not write this piece, who *could* have written it? The reply was given at once from this country; but when the mystification was exposed, the French critics gave no

sign of awarding honour where honour was due, and probably this translation of the "Relapse" may figure in future French editions as an undoubted work by Voltaire!

On looking back upon the names of these authors by profession, the brightest still is Otway's, of whom his critical biographers have said that, in tragedy, few English poets ever equalled him. His comedies are certainly detestable; but of his tragedies, "Venice Preserved" alone is ever now played. The "Orphan" is read; "Alcibiades," "Don Carlos," "Titus and Berenice" are all forgotten. Successful as he is in touching the passions, and eminently so in dealing with ardent love, Otway, I think, is inferior to Lee, occasionally, in the latter respect. Of Lee, Mrs. Siddons entertained the greatest admiration, notwithstanding his bombast, and she read his "Theodosius, or the Force of Love," with such feeling, as to at once wring sighs from the heart and tears from the eyes. She saw in Lee's poetry a very rare quality, or, as Campbell remarks, "a much more frequent capability for stage effect than a mere reader would be apt to infer from the superabundance of the poet's extravagance." Let it not be forgotten that Addison accuses Lee *and Shakspeare* of a spurious sublimity; and, he adds, that "in these authors, the affectation of greatness often hurts the perspicuity of style!"

The professional authors were not equally successful. Davenant achieved a good estate, and was buried in Westminster Abbey, like a gentleman. Dryden, with less to bequeath, was interred in the same place,

without organ or ceremony, two choristers walking before the body, candle in hand, and singing an ode of Horace—like a poet. His victim, Tom Shadwell, acquired wealth fairly; he lies in Chelsea Church, but his son raised a monument to his memory in the Abbey that he might be in thus much as great a man as his satirist. Congreve, too, is there, after enjoying a greater fortune than the others together had ever built up, and leaving £10,000 of it to ~~Henrietta~~, Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough, who so valued the "honour and pleasure of his company" when living, that, as the next best thing, she sat of an evening with his "wax figure" after he was dead. Among the dead there, also, rest Cibber, Vanbrugh, and Rowe, of whom the first, too careless of his money affairs, died the poorest man.

Better men than either of the last sleep in humbler graves. Poor Nat Lee, tottering homeward from the Bull and Harrow, on a winter's night, and with more punch under his belt than his brain could bear, falls down in the snow, near Duke Street, Lincoln's Inn Fields, and is dead when he is picked up. *He* is shuffled away to St. Clement's Danes. If Lee died tipsy, outside a public-house, Otway died half-starved, within one, at the Bull, on Tower Hill. The merits of Lee and Otway might have carried them to Westminster, but their misfortunes barred the way thither. Almost as unfortunate, Settle died, after hissing in a dragon at Bartholomew Fair, a recipient of the charity of the Charter-house. Crowne died in distress, just as he hoped his "Sir Courtly Nice" would have placed him

at his ease. Wycherley, with less excuse, died more embarrassed than Crowne, or would have done so had he not robbed his young wife of her portion, made it over to his creditors, and left her little wherewith to bury him in the churchyard in Covent Garden. Two other poets, who passed away unencumbered by a single splendid shilling, rest in St. James's, Westminster—Tom Durfey and Bankes. Careless, easy, free, and fuddling Tate, died in the sanctuary of the Mint; and St. George's, Southwark, gave him a few feet of earth; while Brady pushed his way at court to preferment, and died a comfortable pluralist and chaplain to Caroline, Princess of Wales. Farquhar, with all his wit, died a broken-hearted beggar, at the age of thirty-seven; and Dennis, who struggled forty years longer with fortune, came to the same end, utterly destitute of all but the contemptuous pity of his foes, and the insulting charity of Pope.

I think that, of the whole brotherhood, Southerne, after he left the army and had sown his wild oats, was the most prudent, and not the least successful. He was a perfect gentleman; he did not lounge away his days or nights in coffee-houses or taverns, but after labour, cultivated friendship in home circles, where virtue and moderate mirth sat at the hearth. In his bag-wig, his black velvet dress, his sword, powder, brilliant buckles, and self-possession, Southerne charmed his company, wherever he visited, even at fourscore. He kept the even tenor of his way, owing no man anything; never allowing his nights to be the marrer of his mornings; and at six and eighty

carrying a bright eye, a steady hand, a clear head, and a warm heart—wherewith to calmly meet and make surrender of all to the Inevitable Angel.

As Southerne originally wrote "Oroonoko," that tragedy could not now be represented. The mixture of comic scenes with tragic is not its worst fault. His comedies are of no worth whatever, except as they illustrate the manners and habits of his times. They more closely resemble those of Ravenscroft than of Congreve or Wycherley. His "Sir Anthony Love" was successful; it is impossible to conjecture wherefore. It has not a wise sentiment or a happy saying in it; and all to be learned from it is, that Englishmen, when abroad, in those days, used to herd together in self-defence, against being cheated; that they were too wise to learn anything by travel; and were fond of passing themselves off as having made a campaign. As Cowley anticipated Moore, in the "Cutter," so, in "Sir Anthony," has Southerne anticipated Burns. "Of the King's creation," says the supposed Sir Anthony to Count Verola, "you may be; but he who makes a count, never made a man." There is the same sentiment improved in the well-known lines:

> "A king may mak' a belted knight,
> A marquis, duke, an' a' that;
> But an honest man's aboon his might,
> Gude faith he canna fa' that."

Southerne was not more famous for the nicety of his costume than "little starched Johnny Crowne" was for his stiff, long cravat; or Dryden for his Norwich drugget suit, or his gayer dress in later days,

when, with sword and Chadrieux wig, he paraded the Mulberry Garden with his Mistress Reeve—one of that marvellous company of 1672, which writers with long memories used to subsequently say could never be got together again. Otway's thoughtful eye redeemed his slovenly dress and his fatness, and seemed to warrant the story of his repenting after his carousing. Lee dressed as ill as Otway, but lacked his contemplative eye, yet excelled him in fair looks, and in a peculiar luxuriance of hair.

Shaftesbury, in his "Characteristics," shows us how the play-house authors throned it in coffee-houses, and were worshipped by small wits. There were, however, dramatic authors who never went thither; and of these, the ladies, I have now to speak.

Mrs. Barry and Mr. Garrick in "The Wonder."

MRS. CENTLIVRE.

CHAPTER XI.

THE DRAMATIC AUTHORESSES.

DURING this half century, there were seven ladies who were more or less distinguished as writers for the stage. These were the virtuous Mrs. Philips, the audacious Aphra Behn, the not less notorious Mrs. Manley, the gentle and learned Mrs. Cockburn, the rather aristocratic Mrs. Boothby (of whom nothing is known but that she wrote one play, called "Marcatia,"[1] in 1669), fat Mrs. Pix, and that thorough Whig, Mrs. Centlivre. The last four also belong to the beginning of the eighteenth century; and three at least apologised

[1] "Marcelia."

that they, women as they were, should have ventured to become dramatists.

The "virtuous Mrs. Philips," of Evelyn, the "matchless Orinda," of Cowley and other poets, translated the "Pompey" and "Horace" of Corneille. In those grave pieces, represented at court in the early years of the Restoration, the poetess endeavoured to direct the popular taste, and to correct it also. Had she not died (of small-pox, and in the thirty-third year of her age), she might have set such example to the playwrights as the Bettertons did to the actors; but her good intentions were frustrated, and her place was unhappily occupied by the most shameless woman who ever took pen in hand, designedly to corrupt the public.

Aphra Behn was a Kentish woman, whose early years were passed at Surinam, where her father, Johnson, had resided, as lieutenant-general.[1] After a wild training in that fervid school, she repaired to London, married a Dutchman, named Behn, who seems to have straightway disappeared,—penetrated, by means of her beauty, to the court of Charles II.,—and obtained, by means of her wit, an irregular employment at Antwerp, —that of a spy. The letters of her Dutch lovers belong to romance; but there is warrant for the easy freedom of this woman's life. In other respects she was unfortunate. On her return to England, her political reports and prophecies were no more credited than the monitions of old, by Cassandra; so she abandoned England to its fate, and herself "to pleasure and the muses."

Her opportunities for good were great, but she abused

[1] Her father never resided at Surinam. He died on the voyage out.

them all. She might have been an honour to womanhood;—she was its disgrace. She might have gained glory by her labours;—but she chose to reap infamy. Her pleasures were not those which became an honest woman; and as for her "Muses," she sat not with them on the slopes of Helicon, but dragged them down to her level, where the Nine and their unclean votary wallowed together in the mire.

There is no one that equals this woman in downright nastiness, save Ravenscroft and Wycherley; but the latter of these had more originality of invention and grace of expression. To these writers, and to those of their detestable school, she set a revolting example. Dryden preceded her, by a little, on the stage; but Mrs. Behn's trolloping muse appeared there before the other two writers I have mentioned, and was still making unseemly exhibition there after the coming of Congreve. With Dryden she vied in indecency, and was not overcome. To all other male writers of her day she served as a provocation and an apology. Intellectually, she was qualified to have led them through pure and bright ways; but she was a mere harlot, who danced through uncleanness, and dared or lured them to follow. Remonstrance was useless with this wanton hussey. As for her private life, it has found a champion in a female friend, whose precious balsam breaks the head it would anoint. According to this friend, Mrs. Behn had numerous good qualities; but "she was a woman of sense, and consequently loved pleasure;" and she was "more gay and free than the modesty of the precise will allow."

Of Aphra Behn's eighteen plays, produced between 1671 and 1696,—before which last year, however, she had died,—but few are original. They are adaptations from Marlowe, from Wilkins, from Killigrew, from Brome, from Tatham, from Shirley, from the Italian comedy, from Molière, and more legitimately from the old romances. She adapted skilfully; and she was never dull. But then, all her vivacity is wasted on filth. When the public sent forth a cry of horror at some of the scenes in her play of "The Lucky Chance," she vindicated herself by asking, "was she not loyal?" —"Tory to the back bone;"—had she not made the King's enemies ridiculous, in her five-act farces;—and had she not done homage to the King, by dedicating her "Feigned Courtezans" to Nell Gwyn, and styling that worthy sister of hers in vice and good nature so perfect a creature as to be something akin to divinity?

For Mrs. Manley there was more excuse. That poor daughter of an old royalist had some reason to depict human nature as bad in man and in woman. The young orphan trusted herself to the guardianship of a seductive kinsman, who married her when he had a wife still living. This first wrong destroyed her, but not her villainous cousin; and unfortunately, the woman upon whom the world looked cool, incurred the capricious compassion of the Duchess of Cleveland. When the caprice was over, and Mrs. Manley had only her own resources to rely upon, she scorned the aid offered her by General Tidcombe, and made her first venture for the stage in the tragedy of "Royal Mischief," produced at the Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre,

in 1696. It is all desperate love, of a very bad quality, and indiscriminate murder, relieved by variety in the mode of killing; one unfortunate gentleman, named Osman, being thrust into a cannon and fired from it, after which his wife, Selima, is said to be

"Gathering the smoking relics of her lord!"

The authoress in her next venture, in the same year, a comedy, written in a week, and which perished in a night, "The Lost Lover," introduced what the public had been taught to appreciate—a virtuous wife. Her other pieces, written at intervals of ten years, were, "Almyna," founded on the story of the Caliph who was addicted to marrying one day, and beheading his wife the next; and "Lucius," a semi-sacred play, on the supposed first Christian king of Britain—both unsuccessful.

Mrs. Manley survived till 1724. When not under the "protection" of a friend, or in decent mourning for the lovers who died mad for her, she was engaged in composing the *Memoirs of the New Atalantis*,—a satire against the Whig ministry, the authorship of which she courageously avowed, rather than that the printer and publisher should suffer for her. The Tory ministry which succeeded, employed her pen; and with Swift's Alderman Barber,—he being Tory printer, she resided till her death, mistress of the house, and of the alderman.

Contemporary with Mrs. Manley was Miss Trotter, the daughter of a Scottish officer, but better known as Mrs. Cockburn, wife and widow of an English clergyman. She was at first a very learned young lady,

whose speculations took her to the Church of Rome, from which in later years she seceded. She was but seventeen, when, in 1696, her sentimental tragedy, "Agnes de Castro," was played at Drury Lane. Her career, as writer for the stage, lasted ten years, during which she produced five pieces, all of a sentimental but refined class,—illustrating love, friendship, repentance, and conjugal faith. There is some amount of word-spinning in these plays; and this is well marked by Genest's comment on Mrs. Cockburn's "Revolution of Sweden,"—namely, that if Constantia, in the third act, had been influenced by common sense, she would have spoiled the remainder of the play.

Nevertheless, Mrs. Cockburn was a clever woman, and kept no dull household, though she there wrote a defence of Locke, while her reverend husband was pursuing an account of the Mosaic deluge. As a metaphysical and controversial writer, she gathered laurels and abuse in her day, for the latter of which she found compensation in the friendship and admiration of Warburton. She was a valiant woman too; one whom asthma and the ills of life could not deter from labour. But death relieved her from all these in 1749; and she is remembered in the history of literature as a good and well-accomplished woman—the very opposite of Mrs. Behn and all her heroines.

Fat Mrs. Pix enjoyed a certain sort of vogue from 1696 to 1709.[1] She came from Oxfordshire, was the

[1] The *Biographia Dramatica* gives 1709 as the year of Mrs. Pix's last play; but this is certainly an error, as Mrs. Bracegirdle, who retired in 1707, is in the cast.

daughter of a clergyman, was married to a Mr. Pix, and was a woman of genius, and much flesh. She wrote eleven plays, but not one of them has survived to our time. Her comedies are, however, full of life; her tragedies more than brimful of loyalty; later dramatists have not disdained to pick up some of Mrs. Pix's forgotten incidents; and indeed, contemporary playwrights stole her playful lightning, if not her thunder; her plots were not ill conceived, but they were carried out by inexpressive language, some of her tragedies being in level prose, and some mixtures of rhyme and blank verse. She herself occasionally remodelled an old play, but did not improve it; while, when she trusted to herself, at least in a farcical sort of comedy, she was bustling and humorous. Mrs. Manley, Mrs. Cockburn, and Mrs. Pix were ridiculed in a farce called the "Female Wits," their best endowments satirised, and their peculiarities mimicked. The first and last of those ladies represented some of their dramas as written by men, a subterfuge to which a greater than either of them was also obliged to resort, namely, Susanna Centlivre.

Susanna Freeman was her maiden name. She was the orphan daughter of a stout but hardly-dealt with parliamentarian, and of a mother who died too early for the daughter's remembrance. Anthony Hammond is said to have been in love with her, a nephew of Sir Stephen Fox to have married her, and a Captain Carrol to have left her a widow—all before she was well out of her teens. Thus she had passed through a school of experience, and to turn it to account, Susanna Carrol began writing for the stage. Writing

for—and acting on it, for we find her in 1706 playing "Alexander the Great" at Windsor, where she also married Mr. Centlivre, Queen Anne's chief cook.

Of Mrs. Centlivre's nineteen plays, three at least are still well known, the "Busy Body," the "Wonder," and "A Bold Stroke for a Wife." When she offered the first to the players—it was her ninth play—the actors unanimously denounced it. Wilks, who had hitherto been unaccustomed to the want of straining after wit, the common sense, the unforced sprightliness, the homely nature, for which this piece is distinguished—declared that not only would it be "damned," but that the author of it could hardly expect to avoid a similar destiny;[1] and yet its triumph was undoubted, though cumulative.

Hitherto the authoress had written a tragi-comedy or two, the comic scenes in which alone gave evidence of strength, but not always of delicacy. She had, in others, stolen wholesale from Molière, and the old English dramatists. She produced a continuation to the "Busy Body" in "Marplot," but we do not care for it; and it is not till her fourteenth piece, the "Wonder," appeared in 1714, that she again challenges admiration. This, too, is an adaptation; but it is superior to the "Wrangling Lovers," from which it is partly taken, and which had no such hero as the Don Felix of Wilks. The "Bold Stroke for a Wife" was first played in 1718, when the Tory public had forgiven the author for her satires against them, and

[1] Genest states in strong terms his utter disbelief in this story. It is stated in the *Biog. Dram.* that Wilks used this strong expression regarding "A Bold Stroke for a Wife."

the theatrical public her fresh adaptations of old scenes and stories. The "Bold Stroke for a Wife" is entirely her own, and has had a wonderful succession of Colonel Feignwells, from C. Bullock down to Mr. Braham! This piece, however, was but moderately successful; but it has such vivacity, fun, and quiet humour in it, that it has outlived many a one that began with greater triumph, and in "the real Simon Pure," first acted by Griffin, it has given a proverb to the English language. One other piece, the "Artifice," a five-act farce, played in 1722, concludes the list of plays from the pen of this industrious and gifted woman.

Mrs. Centlivre had unobtrusive humour, sayings full of significance rather than wit, wholesome fun in her comic, and earnestness in her serious, characters. Mrs. Centlivre, in *her* pictures of life, attracts the spectator. There may be, now and then, something, as in Dutch pictures, which had been as well away; but this apart, all the rest is true, and pleasant, and hearty; the grouping perfect, the colour faithful, and enduring too—despite the cruel sneer of Pope, who, in the *Life of Curll*, sarcastically alludes to her as "the cook's wife in Buckingham Court," in which vicinity to Spring Gardens, Mrs. Centlivre died in 1723.

Such were the characteristics of the principal authors who led, followed, trained, or flattered the public taste of the last half of the seventeenth century, and a few of them of the first part of the century which succeeded. Before we pass onward to the stage of the eighteenth century, let us cast a glance back, and look at the quality of the audiences for whom these poets catered.

PRYNNE.

CHAPTER XII.

THE AUDIENCES OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

Speedily after the Restoration, there was no more constant visitor at the theatre than Charles II., with a gay, and what is called a gallant, gathering. Thus we are arrested by a crowd at the Temple Gate. On the 15th of August 1661, Charles and the Duke and Duchess of York are leaving the apartments of the Reader, Sir Henry Finch, with whom they have been dining, and an eager audience is awaiting them in the Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre, where "The Wits" is to be represented,—a piece "never yet acted," says Pepys, "with scenes." Two nights later, the same

piece is playing, and the Queen of Bohemia is there, "brought by my Lord Craven," whom some do not scruple to speak of as the ex-Queen's husband. A week later, Charles and "Madame Palmer" were at the theatre in Drury Lane, with the Duke of York and his wife. "My wife," says Pepys, "to her great content had a full sight of them all the while." The King's Madame Palmer became, in fact, an attraction; seated between Charles and his brother, Pepys beheld her a few weeks later, when he and his wife escorted Lord Sandwich's young daughters to the theatre, and obtained places close to Madame and her double escort. The play was Johnson's "Bartholomew Fair," with the puppets, and all its virulent satire against the Puritans. As Pepys listened and remembered that no one had dared to bring forward this slashing play for the last forty years, he wondered at the audacity of managers now, and grieved that the King should countenance it. But what recked the laughing King, when Puritanism was in the dust, and troops of cavaliers were singing, "Up go we?"

Occasionally, if Pepys witnesses a play ill-acted, he finds compensation in sitting near some "pretty and ingenious lady." At that time oranges were more costly than pines are now, and to offer one of the former, even to an unknown fair neighbour, was an intimation of a readiness on the part of the presenter to open a conversation. To behold his most sacred Majesty seated in his box was for ever, with Pepys, even a stronger attraction than the eyes or the wit of the fairest and sprightliest of ladies. Again and

again, he registers a vow to refrain from resorting to the theatre during a certain period, but he no sooner hears of the presence there of his religious and gracious King, than he breaks his vow, rushes to the play, perjures himself out of loyal courtesy, and next morning writes himself down an ass.

At the Cockpit in Drury Lane, Charles's consort, Catherine, was exhibited to the English people for the first time on an autumn afternoon of 1662, when Shirley's "Cardinal" was represented. Pepys, of course, was there too, and reproduces the scene: "By very good fortune, I did follow four or five gentlemen who were carried to a little private door in a wall, and so crept through a narrow place, and came into one of the boxes next the King's, but so as I could not see the King or Queen, but many of the fine ladies, who are not really so handsome generally, as I used to take them to be, but that they are finely dressed. The company that come in with me into the box were all Frenchmen that could speak no English; but, Lord, what sport they made to ask a pretty lady that they got among them, that understood both French and English, to make her tell them what the actors said!"

Soon after this, in dreary November, there is again a crowded audience to greet the King and Queen, with whom now appears the Castlemaine, once more, and near her Lucy Walter's boy, the Duke of Monmouth, all beauty and pretty assurance; and Pepys sees no harm in a company who have come together to witness a comedy whose name might well describe

the look and bearing of the outraged Queen, namely, the "Scornful Lady." No wonder that, in December, at the tragedy of "The Valiant Cid," she did not smile once during the whole play.[1] But nobody present on that occasion seemed to take any pleasure but what was in the greatness and gallantry of the company.

That greatness and that gallantry were the idols of the diarist. With what scorn he talks of the audience at the Duke's Theatre a few days later, when the "Siege of Rhodes" was represented. He was ill-pleased. The house was "full of *citizens!*" "There was hardly," says the fastidious son of an honest tailor, "a gallant man or woman in the house!" So, in January 1663, at the same theatre, he records that "it was full of citizens, and so the less pleasant." The Duke's House was less "genteel" than the Cockpit; but the royal visitors at the latter were not much more refined in their manners than the audience in Lincoln's Inn Fields, or Salisbury Court. Early in January 1663, the Duke of York and his wife honoured a play of Killigrew's by their presence, and did not much edify the spectators by their conduct. "They did show," writes the immortal journalist, "some impertinent and methought unnatural dalliances there, before the whole world, such as kissing of hands, and leaning upon one another."

But there were worse scenes than these conjugal displays at the King's House. When Pepys was dying to obtain the only prize in all the world he desired, Lady Castlemaine's picture, that bold person was be-

[1] Pepys certainly means on account of the dulness of the play.

ginning to lose, at once, both her beauty and her place of favour with the King. Pepys was immensely grieved, for she was always more to him than the play and players to boot. He had reason, however, to be satisfied that she had not lost her boldness. In January, 1664, the "Indian Queen" was played at the King's House, in Drury Lane. Lady Castlemaine was present before the King arrived. When he entered his box, the Countess leaned over some ladies who sat between her and the royal box, and whispered to Charles. Having been thus bold in face of the audience, she arose, left her own box and appeared in the King's, where she deliberately took a place between Charles and his brother. It was not the King alone but the whole audience with him who were put out of countenance by this cool audacity, exhibited to prove that she was not so much out of favour as the world believed.

What a contrast is presented by the appearance of Cromwell's daughter, Lady Mary, in her box at this same theatre, with her husband, Viscount Falconbridge! Pepys praises her looks and her dress, and suggests a modest embarrassment on her part, as the house began to fill, and the admiring spectators began to gaze too curiously on Oliver's loved child; "she put on her vizard, and so kept it on all the play, which of late has become a great fashion among the ladies, which hides their whole face."

Mary Cromwell, modestly masked, was a prettier sight than what Pepys on other occasion describes as "all the pleasure of the play;" meaning thereby, the

presence of Lady Castlemaine, or of Miss Stewart, her rival in royal favour, but not her equal in peerless beauty. With these, but in less exalted company than they, we now meet with Nell Gwyn, in front of the house. She is seen gossiping with Pepys, who is ecstatic at the condescension; or she is blazing in the boxes, prattling with the young and scented fops, and impudently lying across any three of them, that she may converse as she pleases with a fourth. And there is Sir Charles Sedley looking on, smiling with or at the actors of these scenes, among the audience, or sharply and wittily criticising the players on the stage, and the words put into their mouths by the author, or flirting with vizard masks in the pit. Altogether, there is much confusion and interruption; but there is also, occasionally, disturbance of another sort, as when, in June 1664, a storm of hail and rain broke through the roof of the King's House, and drove the half-drowned people from the pit in a disorder not at all admired.

Like Evelyn, Pepys was often at the Court plays, but, except with the spectacle of the Queen's ladies, and the King's too, for that matter, he found small delight there,—the house, although fine, being bad for hearing. This Court patronage, public and private, increased the popularity of the drama, as the vices of the King increased the fashion of being dissolute; and when Charles was sadly in need of a collecting of members of parliament to throw out a bill which very much annoyed him, and was carried against him, he bade the Lord Chamberlain to scour the play and

other houses, where he knew his parliamentary friends were to be found, and to send them down to vote in favour of their graceless master.

Ladies of quality, and of good character, too, could in those days appear in masks in the boxes, and unattended. The vizard had not yet fallen to the disreputable. Such ladies as are above designated entered into struggles of wit with the fine gentlemen, bantering them unmercifully, calling them by their names, and refusing to tell their own. All this was to the disturbance of the stage, but this battle of the wits was so frequently more amusing than what might be passing for the moment on the stage, that the audience near listened to the disputants rather than to the actors. Sir Charles Sedley was remarkable as a disputant with the ladies, and as a critic of the players. That the overhearing of what was said by the most famous of the box visitors was a pleasant pastime of many hearers, is made manifest by Pepys, who once took his place on "the upper bench next the boxes," and described it as having "the advantage of seeing and hearing the great people, which may be pleasant when there is good store."

To no man then living in England did fellowship with people of quality convey such intense delight as to Pepys. "Lord!" he exclaims, in May 1667, "how it went against my heart to go away from the very door of the Duke's playhouse, and my Lady Castlemaine's coach, and many great coaches there, to see 'The Siege of Rhodes.' I was very near making a forfeit," he adds, "but I did command myself."

He was happiest with a baronet like Sir Philip Frowd at his side, and behind him a couple of impertinently pretty actresses, like Pierce and Knipp, pulling his hair, drawing him into gossiping flirtations, and inducing him to treat them with fruit. The constant presence of lively actresses in the front of the house was one of the features of the times, and a dear delight to Pepys, who was never weary of admiring their respective beauties.

Proud as he was of sitting, for the first time in his life, in a box, at four shillings, he still saw the pit occupied by greater men than any around him, particularly on the first night of a new piece. When Etherege's comedy, "She Would if She Could," was first played, in February 1668, to one of the most crowded, critical, and discontented audiences that had ever assembled in the Duke's House, the pit was brilliant with peers, gallants, and wits. There, openly, sat Buckingham, and Buckhurst, and Sedley, and the author, with many more; and there went on, as the audience waited till the pelting rain outside had ceased to fall, comment and counter-comment on the merits of the piece and of the actors. Etherege found fault with the players, but the public as loudly censured the piece, condemning it as silly and insipid, but allowing it to possess a certain share of wit and roguishness.

From an entry in the *Diary* for the 21st of December 1668, we learn that Lady Castlemaine had a *double*, who used to appear at the theatre to the annoyance of my lady and the amusement of her royal

friend. Indeed, here is a group of illustrations of the "front of the stage;" the house is the Duke's, the play "Macbeth." "The King and Court there, and we sat just under them and my Lady Castlemaine, and close to a woman that comes into the pit, a kind of a loose gossip that pretends to be like her, and is so, something. The King and Duke of York minded me, and smiled upon me, at the handsome woman near me, but it vexed me to see Moll Davies, in a box over the King's and my Lady Castlemaine's, look down upon the King, and he up to her; and so did my Lady Castlemaine once, to see who it was; but when she saw Moll Davies, she looked like fire, which troubled me."

To these audiences were presented dramatic pieces of a very reprehensible quality. Charles II. has been more blamed than any other individual because of this licentiousness of the stage. I have before ventured to intimate, that the long-accepted idea that the court of Charles II. corrupted English society, and that it did so especially through patronising the licentiousness of poets and the stage, seems to me to be untenable. From of old there had been a corrupt society, and a society protesting against the corruption. Before Charles made his first visit to the theatre, there was lying in Newgate the ex-Royalist, but subsequently Puritan poet, George Wither. In the dedication of his HALLELUJAH, in 1641, he thus describes the contemporary condition of society:—"So innumerable are the foolish and profane songs now delighted in, to the dishonour of our language and religion, that hal-

lelujahs and pious meditations are almost out of use and fashion; yea, not at private only, but at our public feasts, and civil meetings also, scurrilous and obscene songs are impudently sung, without respecting the reverend presence of matrons, virgins, magistrates or divines. Nay, sometimes in their despite they are called for, sung, and acted, with such abominable gesticulations, as are very offensive to all modest hearers and beholders, and fitting only to be exhibited at the diabolical assemblies of Bacchus, Venus, or Priapus."

In the collection of hymns, under this title of HALLELUJAH, there is a hymn for every condition in and circumstance of life, from the King to the Tailor; from a hymn for the use of two ardent lovers, to a spiritual song of grateful resignation "for a Widower or a Widow deprived of a troublesome Yokefellow!" There is none for the player; but there is this hit at the poets, who supplied him with unseemly phrases, and the flattering friends who crowned such bards:—

"Blasphemous fancies are infused,
All holy new things are expell'd,
He that hath most profanely mused,
Is famed as having most excelled:
Such are those poets in these days,
Who vent the fumes of lust and wine,
Then crown each others' heads with bays,
As if their poems were divine."

Against the revived fashion of licentious plays, some of the wisest men among theatrical audiences protested loudly. No man raised his voice with greater urgency than Evelyn. Within six years of the Restoration,

he, who was in frequency of playgoing only second to Pepys, but as sharp an observer and a graver censor than the Admiralty clerk, addressed a letter to Lord Cornbury on this important subject. The letter was written a few weeks previous to the Lent season of 1665, and the writer mourns over a scandal less allowed in any city of Christendom, than in the metropolis of England, namely—"the frequency of our theatrical pastimes during the indiction of Lent. Here in London," he says, "there were more wicked and obscene plays permitted than in all the world besides. At Paris three days, at Rome two weekly, and at the other cities, Florence, Venice, &c., only at certain jolly periods of the year, and that not without some considerable emolument to the public, while our interludes here are every day alike; so as the ladies and the gallants come reeking from the play *late on Saturday night*" (was Saturday then a fashionable day for late performances?) "to their Sunday devotions; and the ideas of the farce possess their fancies to the infinite prejudice of devotion, besides the advantages it gives to our reproachful blasphemers." Evelyn, however, does not pursue his statement to a logical conclusion. He proposes to close the houses on Friday and Saturday, or to represent plays on these nights only for the benefit of paupers in or out of the workhouses. Remembering rather the actresses who disgraced womanhood, than such an exemplary and reproachless pair as Betterton and his wife, he recommends robbery of the "debauched comedians," as he calls them, without scruple. What if they be despoiled of a

hundred or so a year? They will still enjoy more than they were ever born to; and the sacrifice, he quaintly says, will consecrate their scarce allowable impertinences. He adds, with a seriousness which implies his censure of the royal approval of the bad taste which had brought degradation on the stage—"Plays are now with us become a licentious excess, and a vice, and need severe censors, that should look as well to their morality as to their lines and numbers."

This grave and earnest censor, however, allowed himself to be present at stage representations which he condemns. He objects but does not refrain. He witnesses masques at Court, and says little; enjoys his play, and denounces the enjoyment, in his diary, when he reaches home. He has as acute an eye on the behaviour of the ladies, especially among the audience, as for what is being uttered on the stage. "I saw the tragedy of 'Horace,'" he tells us, in February 1668, "written by the *virtuous* Mrs. Phillips, acted before their Majesties. Betwixt each act a masque and antique dance." Then speaking of the audience, where the King's "lady" was wont to outblaze the King's "wife," he adds:—"The excessive gallantry of the ladies was infinite: those especially on that . . . Castlemaine, esteemed at £40,000 and more, far outshining the Queen." Later in the year he is at a new play of Dryden's, "with several of my relations." He describes the plot as "foolish, and very profane. It afflicted me," he continues, "to see how the stage was degenerated and polluted by the licentious times."

When forming part of the audience, by invitation

of the Lord Chamberlain, at the Court plays, at Whitehall, in September 1666, Evelyn uses as freely his right of judgment. He sat ill at ease in the public theatres, because they were abused, he says, "to an atheistical liberty." The invitation to see Lord Broghill's "Mustapha" played before the King and Queen, in presence of a splendid court, was a command. Evelyn attended; but as he looked around, he bethought him of the London that was lying in charred ruins, and he sorrowingly records his disapproval of "any such pastime in a time of such judgments and calamities." With better times come weaker censures on these amusements; and the representation of the "Conquest of Granada," at Whitehall in 1671, wins his admiration for the "very glorious scenes and perspectives, the work of Mr. Streeter, who well understands it." In the following year, although not frequenting court plays, he takes a whole bevy of maids of honour *from* court to the play. Among them was one of whom he makes especial mention, on account of her many and extraordinary virtues, which had gained his especial esteem. This grave maid, among the two vivacious ladies whom Evelyn 'squired to an afternoon's play, was Mistress Blagg, better known to us from Evelyn's graceful sketch of her life, as Mrs. Godolphin.

Mrs. Blagg was herself not the less a lovely actress for being a discreet and virtuous young lady. In 1675[1] Evelyn saw her act in Crowne's masque-comedy, "Calisto, or the Chaste Nymph." His friend acted

[1] Should be 15th and 22d December 1674.

in a noble but mixed company—all ladies—namely, the Ladies Mary and Anne, afterwards Queens of England, the Lady Henrietta Wentworth, afterwards the evilly-impelled favourite of the Duke of Monmouth, and Miss Jennings, subsequently the sharp-witted wife of the great Duke of Marlborough. There were others of less note, with professional actresses to aid them, while a corps-de-ballet of peers and nymphs of greater or less repute, danced between the acts. For the piece, or for the interludes, Evelyn had less admiration than he had for Mrs. Blagg's splendour. She had about her, he informs us, £20,000 worth of jewels, of which she had lost one worth about £80, borrowed of the Countess of Suffolk. "The press was so great," he adds, "that it is a wonder she lost no more;" and the intimation that "the Duke" (of York) "made it good," shows that Mrs. Blagg was fortunate in possessing the esteem of that not too liberal prince. The entire stage arrangements at Whitehall were not invariably of a liberal character, and the audiences must have had, on some occasions, an uncourtly aspect; "people giving money to come in," he writes in this same year 1675, "which was very scandalous, and never so before at Court-diversions."

Of the turbulence of audiences in those days, there are many evidences on record. It was sometimes provoked, at others altogether unjustifiable, and always more savage than humorous. In 1669, Mrs. Corey gratified Lady Castlemaine, by giving an imitation of Lady Harvey, throughout the whole of the part of Sempronia, in "Catiline's Conspiracy." Lady Har-

batants. The stage was that of the Duke's Company, then playing in Dorset Gardens. The adversaries fought on, till Dering got a thrust from the Welshman which stretched him on the boards; whereupon the authorities intervened, as there was no more mischief to be done, and put Master Vaughan under restraint, till Dering's wound was declared not to be mortal.

The 'tiring rooms of the actresses were then open to the fine gentlemen who frequented the house. They stood by at the mysteries of dressing, and commented on what they beheld and did not behold, with such breadth and coarseness of wit, that the more modest or least impudent ladies sent away their little handmaidens. The dressing over, the amateurs lounged into the house, talked loudly with the pretty orange girls, listened when it suited them, and at the termination of the piece crowded again into the 'tiring room of the most favourite and least scrupulous of the actresses. Among these gallants who thus oscillated between the pit and the dressing bowers of the ladies, was a Sir Hugh Middleton, who is not to be confounded with his namesake of the New River. On the second Saturday of February 1667, Sir Hugh was among the joyous damsels dressing for the play, behind the stage of old Drury. The knight was so unpleasantly critical on the nymphs before him, that one of them, sharp-tongued Beck Marshall, bade him keep among the ladies of the Duke's House, since he did not approve of those who served the King. Sir Hugh burst out with a threat,

that he would kick, or what was worse, hire his footman to kick, her. The pretty but angry Rebecca nursed her wrath all Sunday; but on Monday she notified the ungallant outrage to the great champion of insulted dames, the King. Nothing immediately came of it; and on Tuesday, there was Sir Hugh, glowering at her from the front of the house, and waylaying her, as she was leaving it with a friend. Sir Hugh whispers a ruffianly-looking fellow, who follows the actress, and presses upon her so closely, that she is moved by a double fear—that he is about to rob, and perhaps stab her. A little scream scares the bravo for a minute or so. He skulks away, but anon slinks back; and, armed with the first offensive missile he could pick up in a Drury Lane gutter, he therewith anoints the face and hair of the much-shocked actress, and then, like the valiant fellows of his trade, takes to his heels. The next day, sweet as Anadyomene rising from the sea, the actress appeared before the King, and charged Sir Hugh with being the abettor of this gross outrage. How the knight was punished, the record in the State Paper Office does not say; but about a fortnight later a royal decree was issued, which prohibited gentlemen from entering the 'tiring rooms of the ladies of the King's Theatre. For some nights the gallants sat ill at ease among the audience; but the journals of the period show that the nymphs must have been as little pleased with this arrangement as the fine gentlemen themselves, who soon found their way back to pay the homage of flattery to the most insatiable of goddesses.

Not that all the homage was paid to the latter. The wits loved to assemble, after the play was done, in the dressing-rooms of the leading actors with whom they most cared to cultivate an intimacy. Much company often congregated here, generally with the purpose of assigning meetings, where further enjoyment might be pursued.

Then, when it was holiday with the legislature, the house was filled with parliament-men. On one of these occasions, Pepys records, "how a gentleman of good habit, sitting just before us, eating of some fruit in the midst of the play, did drop down as dead; but with much ado, Orange Moll did thrust her finger down his throat, and brought him to life again." This was an incident of the year 1667.

Returning to the front of the stage, we find the ladies in the boxes subjected to the audible criticisms of "the little cockerells of the pit," as Ravenscroft calls them, with whom the more daring damsels entered into a smart contest of repartees. As the "play-house" was then the refuge of all idle young people, these wit-combats were listened to with interest, from the town fops to the rustic young squires, who came to the theatre in cordivant gloves, and were quite unconscious of poisoning the affected fine ladies with the smell of them. The poets used to assert that all the wit of the pittites was stolen from the plays which they read or saw acted. It seemed the privilege of the box-loungers to have none, or to perform other services; namely, to sit all the evening by a mistress, or to blaze from "Fop's corner," or to mark the modest women,

by noting those who did not use their fans through a whole play, nor turn aside their heads, nor, by blushing, discover more guilt than modesty. Thrice happy was she who found the greatest number of slaves at the door of her box, waiting obsequiously to hand or escort her to her chair. These beaux were hard to fix, so erratic were they in their habits. They ran, as Gatty pertinently has it, "from one play-house to the other play-house; and if they like neither the play nor the women, they seldom stay any longer than the combing of their perriwigs, or a whisper or two with a friend, and then they cock their caps, and out they strut again." With fair and witty strangers these gay fellows, their eyebrows and perriwigs redolent of the essence of orange and jasmine, entered into conversation, till a gentleman's name, called by a doorkeeper in the passage, summoned him to impatient companions, waiting for him outside; when he left the "censure" of his appearance to critical observers, like those who ridiculed the man of mode for "his gloves drawn up to his elbows and his perriwig more exactly curled than a lady's head newly dressed for a ball."

Of the vizard-masks, Cibber tells the whole history in a few words: "I remember the ladies were then observed to be decently afraid of venturing bare-faced to a new comedy, till they had been assured they might do it without insult to their modesty; or if their curiosity were too strong for their patience, they took care at least to save appearances, and rarely came in the first days of acting but in masks, which custom,

however, had so many ill consequences attending it, that it has been abolished these many years."

The poets sometimes accused the ladies of blushing, not because of offence, but from constraint on laughter. Farquhar's Pindress says to Lucinda, "Didn't you chide me for not putting a stronger lace in your stays, when you had broke one as strong as a hempen-cord with containing a violent *ti-hee* at a —— jest in the last play?"

Cibber describes the beaux of the seventeenth century as being of quite a different stamp from the more modern sort. The former "had more of the stateliness of the peacock in their mien," whereas the latter seemed to place their highest emulation in imitating "the pert air of a lapwing." The greatest possible compliment was paid to Cibber by the handsome, witty, blooming young fop, Brett, who was so enchanted with the wig the former wore as Sir Novelty Fashion, in "Love's Last Shift," that fancying the wearing it might ensure him success among the ladies, he went round to Cibber's dressing-room, and entered into negotiations for the purchase of that wonderful cataract perriwig. The fine gentlemen among the audience had, indeed, the credit of being less able to judge of a play than of a peruke; and Dryden speaks of an individual as being "as invincibly ignorant as a town-sop judging of a new play."

Lord Foppington, in 1697, did not pretend to be a beau; but he remarks, "a man must endeavour to look wholesome, lest he make so nauseous a figure in the side-box, the ladies should be compelled to turn

their eyes upon the play." It was the "thing" to look upon the company, unless some irresistible attraction drew attention to the stage; and the curtain down, the beau became active in the service of the ladies generally. "Till nine o'clock," says Lord Foppington, "I amuse myself by looking on the company, and usually dispose of one hour more in leading them out."

Some fine gentlemen were unequal to such gallantry. At these, Southerne glances in his "Sir Anthony Love," where he describes the hard drinkers who "go to a tavern to swallow a drunkenness, and then to a play, to talk over their liquor." And these had their counterparts in

> "the youngsters of a noisy pit,
> Whose tongues and mistresses, outran their wit."

It was, however, much the same in the boxes, where the beaux' oath was "zauns," it being token of a rustic blasphemer to say "zounds;" and where, though a country squire might say, "bless us!" it was the mark of a man of fashion to cry, "dem me!"

With such personages in pit and boxes, we may rest satisfied that there was a public to match in the gallery—a peculiar as well as a general public.

A line in a prologue of the year 1672, "The stinking footman's sent to keep your places," alludes to a custom by which the livery profited. Towards the close of the century, the upper gallery of Drury Lane was opened to footmen, *gratis*. They were supposed

to be in attendance on their masters, but these rather patronised the other house, and as Drury could not attract the nobility, it courted the favour of their not very humble servants. Previously, the lacqueys were admitted after the close of the fourth act of the play. They became the most clamorous critics in the house. It was the custom, when these fellows passed the money-taker, to name their master, who was supposed to be in the boxes; but many frauds were practised. A stalwart, gold-laced, thick-calved, irreverent lacquey swaggered past money and check-taker one afternoon, and named "the Lord ——," adding the name which the Jews of old would never utter, out of fear and reverence. "The Lord ——!" said the money-taker to his colleague, after the saucy footman had flung by, "who is he?" "Can't say," was the reply; "some poor Scotch lord, I suppose!" Such is an alleged sample of the ignorance and the blasphemy of the period.

Returning to the pit, I find, with the critics and other good men there, a sprinkling of clerical gentlemen, especially of chaplains; their patrons, perhaps, being in the boxes. In the papers of the day, in the year 1697, I read of a little incident which illustrates social matters, and which, probably, did not much trouble the theatrical cleric who went to the pit so strangely provided. "There was found," says the paragraph, "in the pit of the playhouse, Drury Lane, Covent Garden, on Whitsun Eve, a qualification, signed by the Right Honourable the Lord Dartmouth to the Reverend Mr. Nicholson, to be his Chaplain Extraor-

dinary; the said qualification being wrapped up in a black taffety cap, together with a bottle-screw, a knotting needle, and a ball of sky-colour and white knotting. If the said Mr. Nicholson will repair to the pit-keeper's house, in Vinegar Yard, at the Crooked Billet, he shall have the moveables restored, giving a reasonable gratitude."

Probably Mr. Nicholson did not claim his qualification. His patron was son of the Lord Dartmouth who corresponded with James II. while expressing allegiance to William III., and was subsequently Queen Anne's Secretary of State, and the annotator of Burnet's *History of his Own Times.*

The audiences of King William's time were quick at noticing and applying political allusions; and Government looked as sharply after the dramatic poets as it did after the Jacobite plotters. When much intercourse was going on between the exiled king at St. Germains and his adherents in this country, a Colonel Mottley (of whose son, as a dramatist, I shall have occasion to speak in a future page) was sent over by James with despatches. The Earl of Nottingham laid watch for him at the Blue Posts, in the Haymarket, but the Secretary's officers missed the Colonel, seizing in his place a Cornish gentleman, named Tredenham, who was seated in a room, surrounded by papers, and waiting for the Colonel.

Tredenham and the documents were conveyed in custody before the Earl, to whom the former explained that he was a poet, sketching out a play, that the papers seized formed portion of the piece, and that he

had nothing to do with plots against his Majesty *de facto*. Daniel Finch, however, was as careful to read the roughly-sketched play, as if it had been the details of a conspiracy; and then the author was summoned before him. "Well, Mr. Tredenham," said he, "I have perused your play, and heard your statement, and as I can find no trace of a plot in either, I think you may go free."

The sincerity of the audiences of those days is something doubtful, if that be true which Dryden affirms, that he observed, namely, that "in all our tragedies the audience cannot forbear laughing when the actors are to die: 'tis the most comic part of the whole play." He says, *all* our tragedies; but we know that such was not the case when the heroes of Shakspeare, represented by Betterton, Hart, or Harris, suffered mimic dissolution, and it is but a fair suggestion that it was only in the bombast and fustian tragedies, in which death was the climax of a comic situation, and treated bombastically, that the audiences were moved to laughter.

Sincere or not, the resident Londoners were great playgoers, and gadders generally. I have already quoted Bishop Hackett on this matter. Sermons thus testify to a matter of fashion. It appears from a play, Dryden's "Sir Martin Marall," that if Londoners were the permanent patrons, the country "quality" looked for an annual visit. At the present time it is the visitors and not the residents in London who most frequent the theatre. "I came up, as we country gentlewomen use, at an Easter Term, to the destruc-

tion of tarts and cheesecakes, to see a new play, buy a new gown, take a turn in the park, and so down again to sleep with my forefathers."

This resort to the theatres displeased better men than non-juring Collier. Mirthful-minded South, he who preached to the Merchant Tailors of the remnant that should be saved, calls theatres "those spiritual pest-houses, where scarce anything is to be heard or seen but what tends to the corruption of good manners, and from whence not one of a thousand returns, but, infected with the love of vice, or at least with the hatred of it very much abated from what it was before. And that, I assure you, is no inconsiderable point gained by the tempter, as those who have any experience of their own hearts sufficiently know. He who has no mind to trade with the devil, should be so wise as to keep away from his shop." South objects to a corrupt, not to a "well-trod stage."

Yet South, like Collier later, laid to the scene much of the sin of the age.

If we were to judge of the character of women by the comedies of the last half of the seventeenth century, we might conclude that they were all, without exception, either constantly at the play, or constantly wishing to be there. But the Marquis of Halifax, in his *Advice to a Daughter*, shows that they were only a class. "Some ladies," he says, "are bespoke for merry meetings, as Bessus was for duels. They are engaged in a circle of idleness, where they turn round, for the whole year, without the interruption of a serious hour. They know all the players' names, and are intimately

acquainted with all the booths at Bartholomew Fair. The spring, that bringeth out Flies and Fools, maketh them inhabitants in Hyde Park. In the winter, they are an encumbrance to the play-house, and the ballast of the drawing-room."

We may learn how the playhouse, encumbered by the fast ladies of bygone years, stood, and what were the prospects of the stage at this time, by looking into a private epistle. A few lines in a letter from "Mr. Vanbrook" (afterwards Sir John Vanbrugh) to the Earl of Manchester, and written on Christmas Day, 1699, will show the position and hopes of the stage as that century was closing. "Miss Evans," he writes, "the dancer at the new play-house, is dead; a fever slew her in eight and forty hours. She's much lamented by the town, as well as by the house, who can't well bear her loss; matters running very low with 'em this winter. If Congreve's play don't help 'em they are undone. 'Tis a comedy, and will be played about six weeks hence. Nobody has seen it yet." The same letter informs us that Dick Leveridge, the bass singer of Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre, was tarrying in Ireland, rather than face his creditors in England, and that Dogget (of whom there is no account, during the years 1698, 1699, 1700), had been playing for a week at the above theatre, for the sum of £30! This is the first instance I know of, of the "starring" system; and it is remarkable that the above sum should have been given for six nights' performances, when Betterton's salary did not exceed £5 per week.

The century closed ill for the stage. Congreve's play, "The Way of the World," failed to give it any lustre. Dancers, tumblers, strong men, and quadrupeds, were called in to attract the town; and the Elephant at the *Great Mogul*, in Fleet Street, "drew" to such an extent that he would have been brought upon the stage, but for the opinion of a master-carpenter, that he would pull the house down. There was an empty treasury at both the theatres. There was ill-management at one, and ill-health (the declining health of Betterton) to mar the other. And so closes the half century.

NOTE.—In the second edition, after the words, "This is the first instance of the 'starring' system," Dr. Doran adds:—If Dogget was the first *star*, he was also an early stroller, and head of a strolling company. Each member wore a brocaded waistcoat, rode his own horse, and was everywhere respected, as a gentleman. So says Aston, reminding one of Hamlet's "Then came each actor on his ass."

Steele, in the *Tatler* (No. 12), speaks of the manager, MacSwiney, as "little King Oberon," who mortgaged his whole empire (the theatre) to Divito (Christopher Rich), whom Steele thus describes: "He has a perfect skill in being unintelligible in discourse, and uncomeatable in business. But he, having no understanding in this polite way, brought in upon us, to get in his money, ladder-dancers, rope-dancers, jugglers, and mountebanks, to strut in the place of Shakspeare's heroes and Jonson's humorists."

SIR RICHARD STEELE.

CHAPTER XIII.

A SEVEN YEARS' RIVALRY.

The great players, by giving action to the poet's words, illustrated the quaintly expressed idea of the sweet singer who says:

"What Thought can think another Thought can mend."

Nevertheless, the theatres had not proved profitable. The public greeted acrobats with louder acclaim than any poet. King William cared more to see the feats of Kentish Patagonians than to listen to Shakspeare; and, for a time, Dogget, by creating laughter, reaped more glittering reward than Betterton, by drawing

tears. The first season, however, of the eighteenth century was commenced with great spirit. Drury Lane opened with Cibber's "Love Makes a Man," an adaptation from Beaumont and Fletcher. Cibber was the Clodio; Wilks, Carlos; and Mrs. Verbruggen, Louisa. Five other new pieces were produced in this brief season. This was followed by the "Humour of the Age," a dull comedy, by Baker, who generally gave his audience something to laugh at, and showed some originality in more than one of his five pieces. He was an attorney's son, and an Oxford University man; but he took to writing for the stage, had an ephemeral success, and died early, in worse plight than any author, even in the days when authors occasionally died in evil condition. The third novelty was Settle's mad operatic tragedy, the "Siege of Troy,"[1] with a procession in which figured six white elephants! Griffin returned to the stage from the army, with "Captain" attached to his name, and played Ulysses. The dulness and grandeur of Settle's piece were hardly relieved by Farquhar's sequel to his "Constant Couple," "Sir Harry Wildair." The reputation of the former piece secured for the latter a *run* of nine nights, so were successes calculated in those early days. Wilks laid down Sir Harry to enact the distresses of Lorraine, in Mrs. Trotter's new play, "The Unhappy Penitent," which gave way in turn for Durfey's intriguing comedy, "The Bath, or the Western Lass," in which Mrs. Verbruggen's "Gillian Homebred," made her the darling of the town.

[1] The Virgin Prophetess, or the Fate of Troy.

In the same season, the company at Lincoln's Inn Fields produced a like number of new pieces. In the first, the "Double Distress," Booth, Verbruggen, Mrs. Barry, and Mrs. Bracegirdle wasted their talents. Mrs. Pix, the author, having failed in this mixture of rhyme and blank verse, failed in a greater degree in her next play in prose, the "Czar of Muscovy." Booth and Mrs. Barry could do nothing with such materials. The masters forthwith enacted the "Lady's Visiting Day," by Burnaby. In this comedy, Betterton played the gallant lover, Courtine, to the Lady Lovetoy of Mrs. Barry. The lady here would only marry a prince. Courtine wins her as Prince Alexander of Muscovy; and the audience laughed as they recognised therein the incident of the merry Lord Montagu wooing the mad Duchess-Dowager of Albemarle, as the Empress of China, and marrying her under that very magnificent dignity, to any inferior to which the Duchess had declared she would not stoop.

The hilarity of the public was next challenged by the production of Granville (Lord Lansdowne's) "Jew of Venice,"—"improved" from Shakspeare, who was described as having furnished the rude sketches which had been amended and adorned by Granville's new master-strokes![1]

Gildon's dull piece of Druidism, "Love's Victim, or the Queen of Wales," appeared and failed,[2] not-

[1] Second edition. In this piece Bassanio (Betterton) is the most prominent character; and though the whole piece was converted into a comedy, Dogget is said to have acted Shylock with much effect, and without buffoonery. Granville gave the profits of the play to one who needed them, Dryden's son.

[2] This seems inaccurate. The author says it was well received.

withstanding its wonderful cast; but Corye's "Cure for Jealousy" brought the list of novelties merrily to a close; for though the audience saw no fun in it, they did in the anger of the author—a little man, with a whistle of a voice, who abandoned the law for the stage, and was as weak an actor as he was an author. He attributed his failure to the absurd admiration of the public for Farquhar. He was absurd enough to say so in print, and to speak contemptuously of poor George's "Jubilee Farce." In those wicked days, literary men loved not each other!

In 1702, the Drury Lane Company brought out eight new pieces, and worked indefatigably. They commenced with Dennis's "Comical Gallant,"—an "improved" edition of Shakspeare's "Merry Wives," in which Powell made but a sorry Falstaff. This piece gave way to one entirely original, and very much duller, the "Generous Conqueror," of the ex-fugitive Jacobite, Bevil Higgons. In this poor play, Bevil illustrated the right divine and impeccability of his late liege sovereign, King James; denounced the Revolution, by implication; did in his only play what Dr. Sacheverell did in the pulpit, and made even his fellow Jacobites laugh by his bouncing line, "The gods and god-like kings can do no wrong."

Laughter more genuine might have been expected from the next novelty, Farquhar's "Inconstant;" but that clever adaptation of Fletcher's "Wild-Goose Chase," with Wilks for Young Mirabel, did not affect the town so hilariously as I have seen it do when Charles Kemble, gracefully, but somewhat too demon-

stratively, enacted the part of that gay, silly, but lucky gentleman. Still less pleased were the public with the next play, tossed up for them in a month, and condemned in a night, Burnaby's "Modish Husband." Of course, this husband, Lord Promise, is a man who loves his neighbour's wife, and cares not who loves his own. An honest man in this comedy, Sir Lively Cringe, does not think ill of married women, and he is made a buffoon and more, accordingly. When Lady Cringe, in the dark, holds her lover Lionel with one hand, her husband with the other, and declares that her fingers are locked with those of the man she loves best in the world, Sir Lively believes her. In this wise did the stage hold the mirror up to nature at the beginning of the last century.

Not more edifying nor much more successful was Vanbrugh's "False Friend," a *comedy* in which there is a murder enacted before the audience! What the house lost by it was fully made up by the unequivocal success of the next new piece, the "Funeral, or Grief à la Mode." The author was then six and twenty years of age; this was his first piece, and his name was Steele. All that was known of him then was, that he was a native of Dublin, had been fellow-pupil at the Charter House with Addison, had left the University without a degree, and was said to have lost the succession to an estate in Wexford by enlisting as "a *private gentleman* in the Horse Guards;" a phrase significant enough, as the proper designation of that body, at this day, is "Gentlemen of her Majesty's Royal Horse Guards." He was the wildest and wit-

tiest young dog about town, when in 1701, he published, with a dedication to Lord Cutts, to whom he had been private secretary, and through whom he had been appointed to a company in Lord Lucas's Fusiliers, his *Christian Hero*, a treatise in which he showed what he was not, by showing what a man ought to be. It brought the poor fellow into incessant perplexity, and even peril. Some thought him a hypocrite, others provoked him as a coward, all measured his sayings and doings by his maxims in his *Christian Hero*, and Dick Steele was suffering in the regard of the town, when he resolved to redeem the character which he could not keep up to the level of his religious hero, by composing a comedy! He thoroughly succeeded, and there were troopers enough in the house to have beat the rest of the audience into shouting approbation, had they not been well inclined to do so spontaneously. The "Funeral" is the merriest and the most perfect of Steele's comedies. The characters are strongly marked, the wit genial, and not indecent. Steele was among the first who set about reforming the licentiousness of the old comedy. His satire in the "Funeral" is not against virtue, but vice and silliness. When the two lively ladies in widow's weeds meet, Steele's classical memory served him with a good illustration. "I protest, I wonder," says Lady Brumpton (Mrs. Verbruggen), "how two of us thus clad can meet with a grave face." The most genuine humour in the piece was that applied against lawyers; but more especially in the satire against undertakers, and all their mockery of woe. Take the scene in

which Sable (Johnson) is giving instructions to his men, and reviewing them the while :—"Ha, you're a little more upon the dismal. This fellow has a good mortal look—place him near the corpse. That wainscot-face must be a-top o' the stairs. That fellow's almost in a fright, that looks as if he were full of some strange misery, at the end o' the hall! So!—But I'll fix you all myself. Let's have no laughing now, on any provocation. Look yonder at that hale, well-looking puppy! You ungrateful scoundrel, didn't I pity you, take you out of a great man's service, and show you the pleasure of receiving wages? Didn't I give you ten, then fifteen, then twenty shillings a-week, to be sorrowful? And *the more I give you the gladder you are!*" This sort of humour was new, no wonder it made a sensation. Steele became the spoiled child of the town. "Nothing," said he, "ever makes the town so fond of a man as a successful play." Old Sunderland and younger Halifax patronised Steele for his own and for Addison's sake; and the author of the new comedy received the appointment of *Writer of the Gazette.*

After a closing of the houses during Bartholomew Fair, the Drury Lane Company met again, and again won the town by Cibber's "She Would and She Would Not." This excellent comedy contrasts well with the same author's also admirable comedy, the "Careless Husband." In the latter there is much talk of action; in the former there is much action during very good talk. There is much fun, little vulgarity, sharp epigrams on the manners and morals

of the times, good-humoured satire against popery, and a succession of incidents which never flags from the rise to the fall of the curtain. The plot may be not altogether original, and there is an occasional incorrectness in the local colour; but taken as a whole, it is a very amusing comedy, and it kept the stage even longer than Steele's "Funeral."

Far less successful was Drury with the last and eighth new play of this season, Farquhar's "Twin Rivals," for the copyright of which the author received £15, 6s. from Tonson. Farquhar, perhaps, took more pains with this than with any of his plays, and has received praise in return; but after Steele and Cibber's comedies, the "Twin Rivals" had only what the French call a *succès d'estime*.

To the eight pieces of Drury, Lincoln's Inn opposed half a dozen, only one of which has come down to our times, namely, Rowe's "Tamerlane," with which the company opened the season:—Tamerlane, Betterton; Bajazet, Verbruggen; Axalla, Booth; Arpasia, Mrs. Barry. In this piece, Rowe left sacred for profane history, and made his tragedy so politically allusive to Louis XIV. in the character of Bajazet, and to William III. in Tamerlane, that it was for many years represented at each theatre on every recurring 4th and 5th of November, the anniversary of the birth and of the landing of King William. In Dublin, the anniversary of the great delivery from "Popery and wooden shoes," was marked by a piece of gallantry on the part of the Lord Lieutenant, or, in his ab-

sence, the Lords Justices—namely, by arrangement with the manager, admission to the boxes was free to every lady disposed to honour the theatre with her presence!

Rowe has made a virtuous hero of Tamerlane, without at all causing him to resemble William of Orange; but, irrespective of this, there is life in this tragedy, which, with some of the bluster of the old, had some of the sentiment of a new school. In 1746, when the Scottish Rebellion had been entirely suppressed, it was acted on the above anniversaries with much attendant enthusiasm, Mrs. Pritchard speaking an epilogue written for the occasion by Horace Walpole, and licensed by the Chamberlain, the Duke of Grafton, notwithstanding a compliment to his Grace, which Walpole thought might induce the Duke, out of sheer modesty, to withhold his official sanction. Tamerlane has been a favourite part with many actors. Lady Morgan's father, Mr. Owenson, made his first appearance in it, under Garrick's rule; but a Tamerlane with a strong Irish brogue and comic redundant action created different sensations from those intended by the author, and though the audience did not hiss, they laughed abundantly.

To "Tamerlane" succeeded "Antiochus the Great," a tragedy, full of the old love, bombast, and murder. The author was a Mrs. Jane Wiseman, who was a servant in the family of Mr. Wright, of Oxford, where, having filled her mind with plays and romances, she wrote this hyper-romantic play, and having married a

well-to-do Westminster vintner, named Holt, she succeeded in seeing it fail, as it well deserved to do.[1]

It seemed as if the king-killing in the plebeian lady's tragedy required some counter-action, and accordingly, Lord Orrery's posthumous play of "Altemira" was next brought forward. There is a true king and also an usurper in this roaring yet sentimental tragedy, in whom Whigs and Tories might recognise the sovereigns whom they respectively adored. One monarch himself complacently remarks :—

> "Whatever crimes are acted for a crown,
> The gods forgive, when once that crown's put on."

To touch the Lord's anointed is an unpardonable sin ; but if the Whigs were rendered uneasy by this sentiment, they probably found comfort in the speech wherein *Clerimont*[2] (Betterton), while owning respect for the deprived monarch, confesses the fitness of being loyal to the one who displaced him.

To these three tragedies succeeded three now-forgotten comedies, "The Gentleman Cully," in which Booth fooled it to the top of his bent, in the only English comedy which ends without a marriage. The "Beaux' Duel," and the "Stolen Heiress," two of Mrs. Carroll's (she had not yet become Mrs. Centlivre) bolder plagiarisms from old dramatists, brought the Lincoln's Inn season to a close.

In the season of 1703, Drury Lane produced seven, and Lincoln's Inn Fields six, pieces. The first, at

[1] The *Biographia Dramatica* expressly says that it was with the profits of this play that she and her husband set up a tavern in Westminster. Whincop also seems to imply that the piece was a success.

[2] Clorimon.

Drury, was Baker's "Tunbridge Walks," the manners of which smack of the old loose times. Then came Durfey's "Old Mode and the New," a long, dull, satirical comedy, on the fashions of Elizabeth's days and those of Anne. Durfey was then at his twenty-eighth comedy, and in the decline of his powers. Little flourished about him save that terrific beak which served for a nose, and also for an excuse for his dislike to have his likeness taken. In other respects, the wit, on whose shoulder Charles had leaned, to whose songs William had listened, and at them Anne even then laughed, was in vogue, but not with the theatrical public.

A new author tempted that public, in April, with a comedy, entitled "Fair Example, or the Modish Citizens," by Estcourt, a strolling player, but soon afterwards a clever actor in this company, a man whom Addison praised, and a good fellow, whom Steele admired. His career had, hitherto, been a strange one. He ran away from a respectable home at Tewkesbury, when fifteen, to play Roxalana with some itinerants, and fled from the company, on being pursued thither by his friends, in the dress lent him by a kind-hearted girl of the troop. In this dress, Estcourt made his way on foot to Chipping Norton, at the inn of which place the weary supposed damsel was invited to share the room of the landlord's daughter. Then ensued a scene as comic as any ever invented by dramatist, but from which the parties came off with some perplexity, and no loss of honour. The young runaway was caught and sent

home, and thence he was despatched to Hatton Garden, and bound by articles to learn there the apothecary's mystery. It is not known when he broke from these bonds; but it is certain that he again—some say after he had himself failed in the practice of the mystery he had painfully learned, took to the joys and sorrows, trials, triumphs, and temptations of a wandering player's life till 1698, or about that period, when he appeared in Dublin, with success. He was between thirty and forty years of age, when he came to London with the "Fair Example," an adaptation, like the "Confederacy," of Dancour's "Modish Citizens," but not destined to an equal success, despite the acting of Cibber and Norris, and that brilliant triad of ladies, Verbruggen, Oldfield, and Powell. In June, Mrs. Carroll served up Molière's "Médecin malgré lui," in the cold dish called "Love's Contrivance;" and, in the same month, Wilkinson and his sole comedy, "Vice Reclaimed," appeared; and are now forgotten.

Next, Manning tried the judgment of the town with his "All for the Better," a comedy, of triple plots—stolen from old writers. Manning resembled Steele only in leaving the University without a degree. If Steele obtained a Government appointment after his dramatic success, Manning acquired a better after his failure. He was, first, Secretary to our Legation in Switzerland; and, secondly, Envoy to the Cantons; and was about as respectable in diplomacy as in the drama.

Gildon's play of the "Patriot, or the Italian Con-

spiracy," the last produced this year,[1] with Mills as Cosmo de Medici, and Wilks as his son, Julio, merits notice only as an instance of the mania for reconstructing accepted stories. Gildon, towards the close of his wayward and silly career, transmuted Lee's ancient Roman "Lucius Junius Brutus," into the modern Italian "Patriot." The public consigned it to oblivion.

During this season, when "Macbeth" was the only one of Shakspeare's plays performed,[2] the theatre in Dorset Gardens was prepared for opera; and in the summer the company followed Queen Anne to Bath, by command; but there went not with them the most brilliant actress of light comedy that the two centuries had hitherto seen, Mrs. Verbruggen, that sparkling Mrs. Mountfort whose father, Mr. Perceval, was condemned to death for treason against King William, on the day her husband was murdered by Lord Mohun! The Jacobite father was, however, pardoned. Mrs. Mountfort, or Verbruggen, left a successor equal, perhaps superior, to herself, in Mrs. Oldfield.

The season of 1703, at Lincoln's Inn Fields, was distinguished by the success of Rowe's "Fair Penitent,"—the one great triumph of the year.[3] The other novelties require only to be recorded. That most virulent and unscrupulous of Whig partizan-writers,

[1] This is an assumption not justified by the facts. All of this chapter is a mere copying from Genest; and though Genest puts "All for the Better," and "The Patriot" last in his list, it is only because there is no record when they were produced.

[2] "Timon of Athens" was performed at Drury Lane, 5th July 1703.

[3] Scarcely accurate. Downes says that it was "a very good play for three acts; but failing in the two last, answer'd not their expectation," p. 46.

Oldmixon, opened the season with his third and last dramatic essay, "The Governor of Cyprus," supported by Betterton, Booth, Powell, and Mrs. Barry. Oldmixon was a poor dramatist, but he made a tolerable excise officer,—a post which he acquired by his party-writings. He would not, however, be remembered now, but for the pre-eminence for dirt and dulness which Pope has awarded him in the *Dunciad*. The entire strength of the company, Betterton excepted, was wasted on the comedies,—"Different Widows," by a judicious, anonymous author; "Love Betrayed," Burnaby's last of a poor four, and that a marring of Shakspeare's "Twelfth Night;" and "As you find It" (for Mrs. Porter's benefit, in April). This was the only play written by Charles Boyle, grandson of the dramatist Earl of Orrery, to which title he succeeded, four months after his comedy (the dullest in the English language) had failed. Boyle may have been a worthy antagonist of Bentley, touching the genuineness of the "Epistles of Phalaris;" but he could not vie with such writers of comedy as Cibber, Farquhar, and Steele. The production of the "Fickle Shepherdess,"—a ruthless handling of Randolph's fine pastoral, "Amyntas,"—pleased but for a few nights, though every woman of note in the company, and all beautiful, played in it,—making love to, or prettily sighing at, or as prettily sulking with, each other. The great event of the season was, undoubtedly, the "Fair Penitent:" Lothario, Powell; Horatio, Betterton; Altamont, Verbruggen; Calista, Mrs. Barry; Lavinia, Mrs. Bracegirdle.

Rowe had, in his "Tamerlane," thundered, after the manner of Dryden: had tried to be as pathetic as Otway, and had employed some of the bombast of Lee. But he lacked strength to make either of the heroes of that resonant tragedy vigorous. In devoting himself, henceforth, to illustrate the woes and weaknesses of heroines, he discovered where his real powers lay; and Calista is one of the most successful of his portraitures. There is gross and unavowed plagiarism from Massinger's "Fatal Dowry," but there is a greater purity of sentiment in Rowe, who leaves, however, much room for improvement in that respect, by his successors. Richardson saw this, when he made of his Lovelace a somewhat purified Lothario. Rowe, however, notwithstanding the weak point in his Fair Penitent, who is more angry at being found out, than sorry for what has happened, has been eminently successful; for all the sympathy of the audience is freely rendered to Calista. The tragedy may still be called an acting play, though it has lost something of the popularity it retained during the last century, when even Edward, Duke of York, and Lady Stanhope, enacted Lothario and Calista, in the once famous "private theatre" in Downing Street. Johnson's criticism is all praise, as regards both fable and treatment. The style is purely English, as might be expected of a writer who said of Dryden, that—

> "Backed by his friends, th' invader brought along
> A crew of foreign words into our tongue,
> To ruin and enslave our free-born English song.
> Still, the prevailing faction propped his throne,
> And to four volumes let his plays run on."

Shakspeare, in name, at least, re-appears more frequently on the stage during the Drury Lane season of 1703–4, when "Hamlet," "King Lear," "Macbeth," "Timon of Athens," "Richard III.," the "Tempest," and "Titus Andronicus," were performed.[1] These, however, were the "improved" editions of the poets. The novelties were, the "Lying Lover," by Steele; "Love, the Leveller;" and the "Albion Queens." It was the season in which great Anne fruitlessly forbade the presence of vizard-masks in the pit, and of gallants on the stage; recommended cleanliness of speech, and denounced the shabby people who occasionally tried to evade the money-takers.[2] Steele, in his play, attempted to support one of the good objects which the Queen had in view; but in striving to be pure, after his idea of purity, and to be moral, after a loose idea of morality, he failed altogether in wit, humour, and invention. He thought to prove himself a good churchman, he said, even in so small a matter as a comedy; and in his character of comic poet, "I have been," he says, "a martyr and confessor for the church, for this play was damned for its piety." This is as broad an untruth as anything uttered by the "Lying Lover" himself, who, when he does express a mawkish sentiment after he has killed a man in his liquor, can only be held to be "a liar," as before. Steele was condemned for stupidity in a piece, the only ray of humour in which pierces through the dirty, noisy,

1 "The Taming of the Shrew" also—5th July 1704.

2 See Genest ii. 296, for copy of this edict.

drunken throng of gallows birds in Newgate. That Steele seriously intended his play to be the beginning of an era of "new comedy," is, however, certain. In the prologue, it was said of the author—

> "He aims to make the coming action move
> On the tried laws of Friendship and of Love.
> He offers no gross vices to your sight,—
> Those too much horror raise, for just delight."

Steele's comedy was a step in a right direction; and his great fault was pretending to be half-ashamed of having made it. That it had a "*clear* stage and no favour," is literally true. It was one of the first pieces played without a mingling of the public with the players;—an evil fashion, which was not entirely suppressed for threescore years after Queen Anne's decree, when Garrick proved more absolute than her majesty. It was a practice which so annoyed Baron, that proudest of French actors, that to suggest to the audience in the house the absurdity of it, he would turn his back on them for a whole act, and play to the audience on the stage. Sometimes the noise was so loud, that an actor's voice could be scarcely heard. "You speak too low!" cried a pit-critic to Defresne. "And you too high!" retorted the actor. The offended pit screamed its indignation, and demanded an abject apology. "Gentlemen," said Defresne, "I never felt the degradation of my position till now;" . . . and the pit interrupted the bold exordium by rounds of applause, under which he resumed his part.

Of the other pieces produced this season at Drury Lane, it will suffice to say, that "Love the Leveller"

was by "G. B., gent.," who ascribes its failure to his having adopted the counsel of friends, and who consoles himself by the thought, that "it found so favourable a reception that the best plays hardly ever met with a fuller audience." Happy man! his piece was at least damned by a full house. The "Albion Queens" was an old play, by Banks, which, dealing with the affairs of England and Scotland, was held to be politically dangerous; but good Queen Anne now licensed it, on the report of its inoffensiveness made by "a nobleman;" and its dulness, relieved by good acting, delighted our easy forefathers for half a century.

Lincoln's Inn failed to distinguish itself this season. Eton had no reason to be proud of the comedy of its *alumnus*, Walker, "Marry, or Do Worse;" and in the tragedy of "Abra Mulé," with its similes, which continually run away with their rider, the young Master of Arts, Trapp, shows that he was as poor a poet,[1] in his early days, as that translation of Virgil, which so broke the rest of Mrs. Trapp, proved him to be in his later years, when he was D.D., and Professor of Poetry. Dennis's "Liberty Asserted" only demonstrated how heartily he hated the French; and as there was no dramatist who did so, in the same degree, when the French and the Pretender were very obnoxious, some years later, this thunder of Dennis was revived to stimulate antipathies. Queen Anne's Scottish historiographer did nothing for the English stage, by his comedy of "Love at First Sight," and

1 "Abra Mulé" is pronounced by Genest to be a fairly good tragedy. It was certainly very successful, for it was played fourteen times.

farces like the "Stage Coach," the "Wits of Woman," and "Squire Trelooby," are only remarkable because Betterton and the leading actors played in them as readily as in "first pieces."

During May Fair, the theatre was closed, some of the actors playing there, at Pinkethman's booth. In the same season they played before the Queen at St. James's, in the "Merry Wives of Windsor," with Betterton as Falstaff, which he subsequently acted for his own benefit. This piece, and also "Julius Cæsar," "Othello," and "Timon of Athens," were the plays by or *from* Shakspeare, which were played this season.

The season of 1704–5, at Drury Lane, now prospering, to the considerable vexation of Kit Rich, chief proprietor, who felt himself unable to avoid paying his company their salaries, is notable for the production of Cibber's "Careless Husband." He who now reads it for the first time may be surprised to hear that in this comedy a really serious and eminently successful attempt to reform the licentiousness of the drama was made by one who had been himself a great offender.[1] Nevertheless the fact remains. In Lord Morelove we have the first lover in English comedy, since licentiousness possessed it, who is at once a gentleman and an honest man. In Lady Easy, we have, what was hitherto unknown, or laughed at,—a virtuous, married woman. It is a conversational piece, not one of much action. The dialogue is ad-

[1] This is most unfair to Cibber, whose comedies are particularly inoffensive.

mirably sustained, not only in repartee, but in descriptive parts. There is some refinement manifested in treating and talking of things unrefined, and incidents are pictured with a master's art. Cibber's greatest claim to respect seems to me to rest on this elegant and elaborate, though far from faultless comedy. So carefully did he construct the character of the beautiful and brilliant coquette, Lady Betty Modish, whose waywardness and selfishness are finally subdued by a worthy lover, that he despaired finding an actress with power enough to realise his conception. It was written for Mrs. Verbruggen (Mountfort), but she was now dead; Mrs. Bracegirdle *might* have played it; but "Bracy" was not a member of the Drury Lane company. There was, indeed, Mrs. Oldfield, but Colley could scarcely see more in her than an actress of promise. Reluctantly, however, he entrusted the part to her, forboding discomfort;[1] but there ensued a triumph for the actress and the play, for which Colley was admiringly grateful to the end of his life. To her, he confessed, was chiefly owing the success, though every character was adequately cast. He eulogised her excellence of action, and her "personal manner of conversing." He adds, "There are many sentiments in the character of Lady Betty Modish that I may almost say, were originally her own, or only dressed with a little more care than when they negligently fell from her lively humour; had her birth

[1] Incorrect. Cibber's doubts were dispelled by Mrs. Oldfield's playing of Leonora in "Sir Courtly Nice" at Bath two seasons previously. He wrote Lady Betty Modish expressly for her.

placed her in a higher rank of life, she had certainly appeared in reality what in this play she only excellently acted, an agreeably gay woman of quality, a little too conscious of her natural attractions."

Neither Cibber's friends nor foes seem to have at all enjoyed his success. They would not compromise their own reputation by questioning the merit of this rare piece of dramatic excellence, but they insinuated or asserted that he was not the author. It was written by Defoe, by the Duke of Argyll, by Mrs. Oldfield's particular friend, Maynwaring! Congreve, who had revelled in impurity, and stoutly asserted his cleanliness, ungenerously declared, "Cibber has produced a play consisting of fine gentlemen and fine conversation, all together, which the ridiculous town, for the most part, likes." Congreve had not then forgiven the ridiculous world for receiving so coldly his own last comedy, "The Way of the World." Dr. Armstrong has more honestly analysed the play, and pointed out its defects, without noticing its merits; but Walpole, no bad judge of a comedy of such character, has enthusiastically declared that it "deserves to be immortal." It has failed in that respect, because its theme, manners, follies, and allusions are obsolete, to say nothing of a company to follow even decently the original cast, which included Sir Charles Easy, Wilks; Lord Foppington, Cibber; and Lady Betty Modish, Mrs. Oldfield.

Steele's "Tender Husband, or the Accomplished Fools," in which he had Addison for a coadjutor, was

produced in April 1704.[1] Addison's share therein was not avowed till long subsequently; but it was handsomely acknowledged, at last, by Steele, in the *Spectator*. In the concluding paper of the seventh volume, Steele alluded to certain scenes which had been most applauded. These, he said, were by Addison; and honest Dick added, that he had ever since thought meanly of himself in not having publicly avowed the fact. This comedy was chiefly a satire on the evils of romance reading; and was of a strictly moral, yet decidedly heavy tendency; but with a Biddy Tipkin (Mrs. Oldfield), to which there has been, as to Lady Betty Modish, no efficient successor. There was a good end in both these plays. The other novelties, "Arsinoe, Queen of Cyprus," an opera; "Gibraltar, or the Spanish Adventurer," a failure of Dennis's; "Farewell Folly," by Motteux; and the "Quacks," by Swiney—oblivion wraps them all.

In this season Dick Estcourt made his first appearance in London as Dominic, in the "Spanish Friar." Of Shakspeare's plays, "Hamlet," "Henry IV.," and "Macbeth," were frequently repeated during the season.

"Arsinoe," which I have mentioned above, merits a special word in passing, as being the first attempt to establish opera in England, after the fashion of that of Italy. "If this attempt," says Clayton, the composer, who understood English no better than he did music, "shall be a means of bringing this manner of music to be used in my native country, I shall

[1] 23d April 1705.

think my study and pains very well employed." The principal singer was Mrs. Tofts, who for two years had been singing, after the play, at Lincoln's Inn Fields, against Marguerite de l'Epine, the pupil of Greber, and subsequently the ill-favoured but happy wife of Dr. Pepusch, who fondly called her Hecate—she answering good-humouredly to the name. The Earl of Nottingham (son of Lord Chancellor Finch), and the Duke of Bedford, who lost by dice more than his father made by the "Bedford Level," patronised and went into ecstasy at the song and shake of "the Italian lady," as Marguerite was called. The proud Duke of Somerset, who was as mean as he was proud, and, according to Lord Cowper, as cowardly as he was arrogant, supported native talent, in Mrs. Tofts; as did also that Duke of Devonshire, whom Evelyn wonderingly saw lose, with calmness, at Newmarket, £1600, and who was afterwards the munificent lover, and heart-stricken mourner, of another beautiful vocalist, Miss Campion. Mrs. Tofts had another supporter in her too zealous servant, Anne Barwick, who one night went to Drury Lane, and assailed Marguerite with hisses and oranges, to the great disgust of her honest mistress. In such discord did opera commence among us. "Arsinoe," however, had a certain success, towards which the composer, Clayton, contributed little; and he was destined to do less subsequently.

The season of the rival company was passed in two houses:—at Lincoln's Inn Fields, from October till the April of 1705, when the company with the "four

capital B.'s," Betterton, Booth, Mrs. Barry, and Mrs. Bracegirdle, removed to the house in the Haymarket, built for them by Vanbrugh, under a subscription filled by thirty persons of quality, at £100 each, for which they received free admissions for life. Under his licence at Lincoln's Inn Fields, Betterton produced nothing of note this season but Rowe's "Biters," a satirical comedy, which failed. At the end of the season he consigned his licence to Vanbrugh, under whom he engaged as leading tragedian. Vanbrugh opened on the 9th of April, with an opera, the "Triumph of Love." It failed, as did old plays inadequately filled, and new pieces, by Mrs. Pix, Swiney, and one or two other obscure writers, including Chaves, author of a condemned comedy, the "Cares of Love." Baker describes Chaves as a person of no consideration, on the ground that he dedicated his play "to Sir William Read, the Mountebank," who, I think, could very well afford to pay the usual fee. With these poor aids, and many mischances, the first season at the Queen's Theatre, on the site of our present Opera House, came to an unsatisfactory conclusion.

The season of 1705–6, at Drury Lane, with a few nights at Dorset Gardens, would have been equally unsatisfactory, but for one great success to balance the failures of repatching of old pieces, worthless new comedies, and the fruitless struggle of fashionable patrons to sustain Cibber's tragedy, "Perolla and Izadora." The great success was Farquhar's "Recruiting Officer," played on the 8th April 1706, with

this cast. Plume, Wilks; Brazen, Cibber; Kite, Estcourt; Bullock, Bullock; Balance, Keene; Worthy, Williams; Costar Pearmain, Norris; Appletree, Fairbank; Sylvia, Mrs. Oldfield; Melinda, Mrs. Rogers; Rose, Mrs. Susan Mountfort; Lucy, Mrs. Sapsford.

This lively comedy was so successful that Tonson, in a fit of liberality, gave the author fifteen pounds, and a supplementary half crown for the copyright. The money was welcome; for, between having married, or rather being married by, a woman who pretended she had a large fortune, when she really had only a large amount of love for Farquhar, who was more attracted by the pretence than the reality; between this, his commission sold, his patrons indifferent, his family cares increasing, and his health declining, poor George was in sorry need, yet buoyant spirits. Critics foretold that this play would live for ever; but unfortunately it has been found impossible to separate the wit and the lively action from the more objectionable parts, and we may not expect to see its revival. Farquhar has drawn on his own experiences in the construction, and all the amiable people in the piece were transcripts of good Shrewsbury folk, whose names have been preserved. Farquhar immortalised the virtues of his hosts, and did not, like Foote, watch them at the tables at which he was a guest, to subsequently expose them to public ridicule.

"Santlow, famed for dance," first bounded on to the stage during this season, and the heart of Mr. Secretary Craggs bounded in unison. Miss Younger,

too, first trod the boards, March 1706, when about seven years old, as the Princess Elizabeth, in "Virtue Betrayed;" but, perhaps, the most notable circumstance of the year was, that the chapel in Russell Court was then building;[1] but it was under difficulties, to extricate it from which the Drury Lane company played "Hamlet," and handed over the handsome proceeds to the building committee!

Vanbrugh's two comedies, the "Confederacy" and the "Mistake" (the latter still acted under the title of "Lovers' Quarrels"), Rowe's "Ulysses," the "Faithful General," by an anonymous young lady, a forgotten tragedy, the "Revolution of Sweden," by Mrs. Trotter, an equally forgotten comedy, "Adventures in Madrid," by fat Mrs. Pix, tragic, comic, and extravaganza operas, by Lansdown, Durfey, and others,—all this novelty, a fair company of actors, troops of dancers, and a company of vocalists with Dick Leveridge and Mrs. Tofts at the head of them, failed to render the often broken but prolonged season of 1705–6, which begun in Lincoln's Inn Fields, and terminated at the house in the Haymarket, profitable.

In many respects it did not deserve to be, for Vanbrugh, with more wit and humour, and more judgment in adaptation than Ravenscroft, sought to bring back comedy to the uncleanliness in which the latter writer had left it. There came a cry, however, from the outer world against this condition of things. Lord Gardenstone, a lord of seat, I believe, and not

[1] The bill says, "Repairing and fitting up."

a lord of state, as it is said in the North, indignantly remarked of the "Confederacy":—"This is one of those plays which throw infamy on the English stage and general taste, though it is not destitute of wit and humour. A people must be in the last degree depraved among whom such public entertainments are produced and encouraged. In this symptom of degenerate manners we are, I believe, unmatched by any nation that is, or ever was, in the world."

In the "Confederacy," Dogget's fame as an actor culminated. He dressed Moneytrap with the care of a true artist. On an old, threadbare, black coat, he tacked new cuffs and collar to make its rustiness more apparent. Genest, quoting Wilks, adds that the neck of the coat was stuffed so as to make the wearer appear round-shouldered, and give greater prominency to the head. Wearing large square-toed shoes with huge buckles over his own ordinary pair, made his legs appear smaller than they really were. Dogget, we are told, could paint and mould his face to any age. Kneller recognised in him a superior artist. Sir Godfrey remarks that "*he* could only copy nature from the originals before him, but that Dogget could vary them at pleasure and yet keep a close likeness." It must be confessed the public were more pleased with this piece than with Rowe's "Ulysses," in which Penelope gave so bright an example of conjugal duty and maternal love, in the person of Mrs. Barry, to the Ulysses of Betterton, and the Telemachus of Booth. That public would, perhaps, have cared more for the

grace and nature of Addison's "Rosamond," produced at Drury Lane, in March 1707, with its exquisite flattery cunningly administered to the warrior who then dwelt near Woodstock, had it been set by a less incompetent musician than William's old bandmaster, Clayton, the conceited person, who undertook to improve on Italian example, and who violated the accents and prosody of our language, as well as all rules of musical composition. It is singular, however, that neither Arne nor Arnold have been much more successful, in resetting Addison's opera, than Clayton himself. The piece was played but three times, and the author's witty articles against the absurdities of Italian opera are supposed, by some writers, to have owed their satire to the failure of "Rosamond." One great and happy success Addison achieved through this piece, which compensated for any disappointment springing from it. Poetical warrant of its excellence was sent to him from many a quarter; but the brightest wreath, the most elegant, refined, graceful, and the most welcome of all, emanated from his own University. Addison, charmed with the lines, inquired after the writer, and discovered him in an undergraduate of Queen's College, the son of a poor Cumberland clergyman, and named Thomas Tickell. It was a happy day when both met, for then was laid the foundation of a long and tender friendship. To "Rosamond" and his own musical lines upon it, Tickell owed the felicity of his life, as Addison's friend at home, his secretary in his study, his associate abroad, his

assistant and substitute in his office of Secretary of State, and, finally, less happy but not less honourable, the executor of his patron's will, and the editor of his patron's works.

"Rosamond" was produced during one of the most unlucky seasons at Drury Lane, 1706-7; during which Swiney parted from Rich, took the Haymarket, from Vanbrugh, at a rent of £51[1] per night, and carried with him some of the best actors from Drury. "The deserted company," as they called themselves, advertised the "Recruiting Officer," for their benefit, "in which they pray there may be singing by Mrs. Tofts, in English and Italian; and some dancing." The main stay of the season was the "Recruiting Officer." Estcourt was advertised as "the true Serjeant Kite," against Pack, who played it at the Haymarket. At Drury, where Rich depended chiefly on opera, it was said that "sound had got the better of sense;" and the old motto, "*vivitur ingenio*," was no longer applicable. It is at the Haymarket, says the dedication of "Wit without Money," to Newman, the prompter, that "wit is encouraged, and the player reaps the fruit of his labours, without toiling for those who have always been the oppressors of the stage."

In the season of 1706-7, at the Haymarket, Mrs. Oldfield and Mrs. Bracegirdle first played together,—the younger actress ultimately winning or vanquishing the town. Cibber, too, joined the company, at the head of whom remained Betterton and Mrs. Barry. Every effort was made to beat opera, by a production

[1] Should be £5 for every acting day, and not to exceed £700 a year.

of pieces of a romantic or classical cast; and Addison's pen, in prologue on the stage, or in praise in the *Spectator*, was wielded in the cause of the players, his neighbours.

Mrs. Centlivre, and Mrs. Manley, contributed now-forgotten plays. The former,—the "Platonic Lady," in which there is the unpleasant incident of a couple of lovers, who ultimately prove to be brother and sister. Mrs. Manley, in "Almyna," recommended what she had little practised,—unlimited exercise of heroic virtue. Some vamped-up old pieces, with new names, were added, and subscription lists were opened, to enable the company, whose interests were espoused by Lord Halifax, to make head against opera. The greatest attempt to overcome the latter was made, by producing a truly and drily-classical tragedy, by Edmund Smith, called "Phædra and Hippolytus," which the public would not endure above three nights,[1] to the disgust and astonishment of Addison, as recorded in the *Spectator*. Smith, or Neale rather—the former being a name he adopted from a benevolent uncle—was not the man to give new lustre to the stage. Scarcely a year had elapsed since he had been expelled from Oxford University; the brilliancy of his career there could not save him from that disgrace. His success on the stage, when he made this his sole attempt, was perhaps impeded by the exactions of actors and actresses at rehearsal, to suit whose caprices he had to write fresh verses, and furnish them with "tags," whereby to secure applause, as they

[1] It was played four times. Genest, ii. 370.

made their *exit*. The play fell, and the author with it. The once brilliant scholar descended to become a sot. The once best-dressed fop of his day, became known by the nickname of "Captain Rag;" and as neither his wild life nor his careless style of costume seriously affected his great personal beauty, the women, tempering justice with clemency, called him the Handsome Sloven! This scholar, poet, critic, and drunkard, attempted to recover his reputation by writing a tragedy on the subject of Lady Jane Grey; but he died in the attempt.

A greater dramatist than he died this season in a blaze of triumph from the stage, under the dull cloud of poverty at home—George Farquhar. His joyous "Beaux' Stratagem," first played on the 8th of March 1707, was written in six painful weeks. Tonson gave him £30 for the right of printing, and this, with what he received from the managers, solaced the last weeks of the life of the ex-captain, who had sold his commission, and had been deluded by a patron who had promised to obtain preferment for him. Farquhar had lost everything, but sense of pain and flow of spirits. He died in April 1707, while the public were being enchanted by his comedy, so rich in delineation of character and in variety of incident. It was thus cast: Aimwell, Mills; Archer, Wilks; Scrub, Norris; Foigard, Bowen (then newly come from Ireland);[1] Boniface, Bullock; Sullen, Verbruggen (his last original character; the stage was thoughtful of his orphan children as it was of those of Farquhar); Gibbet, Cib-

[1] Bowen came from Ireland about 1689, nearly twenty years before.

ber; Count Bellair, Bowman; Sir Charles Freeman, Keen; Lady Bountiful, Mrs. Powell; Mrs. Sullen, Mrs. Oldfield; Cherry, Mrs. Bicknell; Dorinda, Mrs. Bradshaw. This piece was the great glory of the Haymarket season, 1706–7.

The season of 1707–8 was the last for a time of the two opposing houses, and it requires but a brief notice. Powell at Drury Lane was weak as leading tragedian against Betterton at the Haymarket, and Rich, the manager, produced no new piece. At the rival house the only novelties were Cibber's adaptations of two or three forgotten plays, the bricks with which he built up his, at first "hounded," but ultimately successful, "Double Gallant," in which he played Atall; the same author's "Lady's Last Stake," a heavy comedy; and Rowe's "Royal Convert," a heavier tragedy of the times of Hengist and Horsa. In this play, the courtly author bade for the bays (which were not to encircle his brows till the accession of George I.), by introducing a complimentary prophecy alluding to Queen Anne and the then much-canvassed Union of England and Scotland. This was, perhaps, not worse than the references made by the savage Saxon Rodogune to Venus, and to the Eagle that bore Jove's thunder! There are, nevertheless, some stately scenes in this play. Of its failure, Rowe did not complain, he simply, on printing it, quoted the words, "Laudatur et alget," on the title-page. Critics have thought that the story was of too religious a texture to please. It was too obscure to excite interest.

At the end of this season the two companies were

ordered, by the Lord Chamberlain, to unite; and they were not indisposed to obey. The patent for Drury Lane was then held by Rich, and Sir Thomas Skipwith, who had formerly held a larger share. *The Monthly Mirror*, for March 1798, says that Rich's father was an attorney, to one of whose clients Sir Thomas owed a large sum of money. Being unable to pay it, he put up a part of his theatrical patent to auction, and Rich bought the share for £80! In Christopher Rich's time a *quarter* share was sold to Colman for £20,000. Sir Thomas now consigned what share he held to Colonel Brett—a man more famous, as the husband of the divorced wife of Charles Gerard, second Earl of Macclesfield, of whom fiction still makes the mother of Savage, the poet,—and as the father of Anne Brett, George I.'s *English* mistress, than for aught else, except it be that he was the friend of Colley Cibber. It was by Colonel Brett's influence that the union of the companies was effected, under the patent held by him and Rich; and henceforward the great house in the Haymarket was given up to Swiney and Italian opera, at the following prices for admission, which will be found to form a strong contrast with those at present extracted from the British pocket:—Stage-boxes, 10s. 6d.; Boxes, 8s.;[1] Pit, 5s.; Lower Gallery, 2s. 6d.; Upper Gallery, 1s. 6d.

I have stated above that the union of the companies was the result of an order from the Lord Chamberlain. How absolute was the authority of this official may be

[1] In this season the prices for Boxes seem to have been 15s., 10s. 6d., and 8s.

gathered from various incidents on record. Cibber cites one to this effect. Powell, the actor, holding controversy on theatrical matters, at Will's Coffee House, was so excited as to strike one of the speakers on the opposite side. Unluckily, this speaker was a kinsman of the master or manager of the house where Powell played, and he rushed to the Chamberlain's office to obtain redress, that is vengeance. In the absence of the supreme officer, the Vice-Chamberlain took up the quarrel. He *probably* ordered the actor to offer an apology; and he *certainly* shut up Drury Lane Theatre, because the manager, who had received no communication from him, had permitted Powell to appear before such reparation was made. The embarrassed company of comedians were not allowed to resume their calling for two or three days, and thus serious injury was inflicted on such actors as were paid only on the days of performance. This was in King William's reign, but the power was not less, nor less absolutely exercised in the reign of Queen Anne; and on this very occasion which led to the Chamberlain's order for the union of the companies. Great dissension had arisen at Drury Lane by a new arrangement with respect to benefits, whereby the patentees took a third of the receipts. The more discontented went over to the Haymarket; others remained, protested, and sought for redress at the legal tribunal. Cibber will best tell what followed:—

"Several little disgraces were put upon them, particularly in the disposal of parts in plays to be revived; and as visible a partiality was shown in the

promotion of those in their interest, though their endeavours to serve them could be of no extraordinary use. All this while the other party were passively silent, till one day, the actor who particularly solicited their cause at the Lord Chamberlain's office, being shown there the order signed for absolutely silencing the patentees, and ready to be served, flew back with the news to his companions, then at a rehearsal, at which he had been wanted; when being called to his part, and something hastily questioned by the patentee for his neglect of business, this actor, I say, with an erected look and a theatrical spirit, at once threw off the mask, and roundly told him: 'Sir, I have now no more business here than you have. In half an hour you will neither have actors to command, nor authority to employ them.' The patentee who, though he could not readily comprehend his mysterious manner of speaking, had just glimpse of terror enough from the words to soften his reproof into a cold formal declaration, that 'if he would not do his work he should not be paid.' But now, to complete the catastrophe of these theatrical commotions, enters the messenger, with the order of silence in his hands, whom the same actor officiously introduced, telling the patentee that the gentleman wanted to speak with him, from the Lord Chamberlain. When the messenger had delivered the order, the actor, throwing his head over his shoulder, towards the patentee, in the manner of Shakspeare's Harry VIII. to Cardinal Wolsey, cried: 'Read o'er that! and then to breakfast, with what appetite you may!' Though these

words might be spoken in too vindictive and insulting a manner to be commended, yet, from the fulness of a heart injuriously treated, and now relieved on that instant occasion, why might they not be pardoned? The authority of the patent, now no longer subsisting, all the confederated actors immediately walked out of the house, to which they never returned, till they became themselves the tenants and masters of it."

Let me note here that in May 1708, Vanbrugh wrote to Lord Manchester:—"I have parted with my whole concern (the Queen's Theatre, Haymarket) to Mr. Swiney, only reserving my rent, so he is entire possessor of the Opera, and most people think will manage it better than anybody. He has a good deal of money in his pocket, that he got before by the acting company, and is willing to venture it upon the singers." This proves that the lack of prosperity, which marked the end of the last century, did not distinguish the beginning of the new.

THOMAS DOGGET.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE UNITED AND THE DISUNITED COMPANIES.

THE names of Betterton, Booth, Wilks, Cibber, Mills, Powell, Estcourt, Pinkethman, jun., Keen, Norris, Bullock, Pack, Johnson, Bowen, Thurmond, Bickerstaff—of Mistresses Barry, Bradshaw, Oldfield, Powell, Rogers, Saunders, Bicknell, Knight, Porter, Susan Mountfort, and Cross,—indicate the quality of a company, which commenced acting at Drury Lane, and which, in some respects, was perhaps never equalled; though it did not at first realise a corresponding success. Betterton only "played" occasionally, though he invariably acted well. The new pieces produced

failed to please. The young Kentish attorney, and future editor of Shakspeare,—Theobald, gave the first of about a score of forgotten dramas to the stage; but his "Persian Princess" swept it but once or twice with her train. Taverner, the proctor, who could paint landscapes almost as ably as Gaspar Poussin, proved but a poor dramatist; and his "Maid the Mistress," was barely listened to.

Matters did not improve in 1708–9, in which season Brett's share of the patent was made over to Wilks, Cibber, and Estcourt,—the other shares amounting to nearly a dozen. The only success of this season was achieved by Mrs. Centlivre's "Busy Body" (Marplot, by Pack), and *that* was a success of slow growth. Baker, who had ridiculed his own effeminate ways in Maiden ("Tunbridge Walks"), now satirised the women; but the public hissed his "Fine Lady's Airs," almost as much as they did Tom Durfey's "Prophets." In the latter piece, rakish, careless, penniless Tom, laughed at the religious impostors of the day who dealt with the past dead and with future events; but the public did not see the fun of it, and damned the play, whose author survived to write worse. Then there was the "Appius and Virginia," of Dennis,—of which nothing survives but the theatrical thunder, invented by the author for this tragedy,—and the use of which, after the public had condemned the drama of a man who equally feared France abroad and bailiffs at home, was always resented by him as a plagiarism. In this piece, Betterton acted the last of his long list of the dramatic characters created by him,—Virginius.

Shortly after this took place that famous complimentary benefit for the old player, when the pit tickets were paid for at a guinea each. The actors could scarcely get through "Love for Love," in which he played Valentine, for the cloud of noble patrons clustered on the stage, when guineas by the score were delicately pressed upon him for acceptance,—and Mistresses Barry and Bracegirdle supported him at the close; while the former spoke the epilogue, which was the dramatic apotheosis of Betterton himself.

On the following June, actors and patentees were at issue; and their dissensions were not quelled by the Lord Chamberlain closing the house; from which Rich, of whose oppressions the actors complained, was driven by Collier, the M.P. for Truro, to whom, for political as well as other reasons, a licence was granted to open Drury Lane. When Collier took forcible possession of the house, he found that Rich had carried off most of the scenery and costumes; but he made the best of adverse circumstances and a company lacking Betterton and other able actors; and he opened Drury on November 23rd, 1709, under the direction of Aaron Hill, with "Aurungzebe," and Booth for his leading tragedian.

Booth wished to appear in a new tragedy, and Hill wrote in a week that "Elfrid" which the public damned in a night.[1] Hill was always ready to write. At Westminster, he had filled his pockets by writing

[1] This is a specimen of one of the greatest difficulties in the revision of Dr. Doran. He frequently writes of a play as being damned, which really was played for a few nights with no great success. In the present case, "Elfrid" was played five times.

the exercises of young gentlemen who had not wit for the work; and by and by he will be writing the "Bastard," for Savage. Meanwhile, here was "Elfrid," written and condemned. The author allowed that it was "an unpruned wilderness of fancy, with here and there a flower among the leaves, but without any fruit of judgment." At this time, Hill was a young fellow of four and twenty, with great experience and some reputation. A friendless young "Westminster," he had at fifteen found his way alone to Constantinople, where he obtained a patron in the ambassador, the sixth Lord Paget,—a distant relation of the youthful Aaron. Under the peer's auspices, Hill travelled extensively in the East; and subsequently, ere he was yet twenty, accompanied Sir William Wentworth, as travelling tutor, over most of Europe. Later, his poem of "Camillus," in defence of Lord Peterborough, procured for him the post of secretary to that brave and eccentric peer, with whom he remained till his marriage. Then Aaron lived with a divided allegiance to his wife and the stage, for the improvement of which he had many an impracticable theory. He would willingly have written a tragedy for Booth once a week.

Tragedies not being in request, Hill tried farce, and produced his "Walking Statue," a *screamer*, as improbable as his "Elfrid" was *unpruned*. The audience would not tolerate it; and Hill came before them in a few days with a comedy,—"Trick upon Trick," at which the house howled rather than

laughed.[1] Whereupon Hill new-nibbed his pen, and addressed himself to composition again.

The treasury gained more by the appearance of Elrington, in "Oroonoko," than by Hill's novelties. Then, the trial of putting the fairy dancer, Santlow, into boy's clothes, and giving her the small part of the Eunuch in "Valentinian" to play, and an epilogue to be spoken in male attire, succeeded so well, that she was cast for Dorcas Zeal in Charles Shadwell's "Fair Quaker of Deal," wherein she took the town, and won the heart of Booth. In this character-piece Flip, the sea-brute, is contrasted with Beau Mizen, the sea-fop; but the latter is, in some degree, a copy of Baker's Maiden, the progenitor of the family of Dundreary.

From Collier, there went over to the Haymarket, under Swiney, Betterton, Wilks, Cibber, Dogget, Mills, Mrs. Barry, Oldfield, and other actors of mark. Drury had opened with Dryden. The Queen's Theatre, Haymarket, commenced its season on the 15th of September 1709, with Shakspeare. The play was "Othello," with Betterton in the Moor; but oh! shade of the bard of Avon, there was between the acts a performance by "a Mr. Higgins, a posture-master from Holland," and the critics, silently admiring "old Thomas," loudly pronounced the feats of the pseudo-Hollander to be "marvellous." The only great event of the season was the death of

[1] The comedy was entitled "Squire Brainless, or, Trick upon Trick." Neither of these pieces was the ghastly failure Dr. Doran implies.

Betterton, soon after his benefit, on the 13th of April 1710, of which I have already spoken at length.

About this period, the word *encore* was introduced at the operatic performances in the Haymarket, and very much objected to by plain-going Englishmen. It was also the custom of some who desired the repetition of a song to cry *altra volta! altra volta!* The Italian phrase was denounced as vigorously as the French exclamation; and a writer in the *Spectator* asks when it may be proper for him to say it in English, and would it be vulgar to shout *again! again!*

The season of 1710–11 was a languishing one. Players and playgoers seemed to feel that the great glory of the stage was extinguished in the death of Betterton and the departure of Mrs. Barry. Collier, restless and capricious, gave up Drury Lane for opera at the Haymarket, Swiney exchanging with him. The united company of actors assembling at the former, contributed £200 a year as a sort of compensation to Collier, as well as refraining from playing on a Wednesday, when an opera was given on that night. The Thursday audiences were all the larger for this; but the inferior actors, who were paid by the day, felt the hardship of this arrangement, and noblemen, who espoused the part of the English players against the foreign singers, expressed an opinion, as they walked about behind the scenes, that "it was shameful to take part of the actors' bread from them to support the silly diversions of people of quality."

Booth and Powell shared the inheritance of Betterton, and Mrs. Bradshaw succeeded to that of Mrs.

Barry; but Mrs. Porter was soon to dispute it with her. The old stock pieces were well cast, but no new play obtained toleration for above a night or two. Mrs. Centlivre's "Marplot,"[1] a poor sequel to the "Busy Body," brought her nothing more substantial than a dedication fee of £40 from the Earl of Portland, the son of William III.'s "Bentinck." This was more than Johnson obtained for dedicating his condemned comedy, the "Generous Husband," to the last of the three Lords Ashburnham, who were alive in 1710. Poor Elkanah Settle, too, pensioned poet of the city, and a brother of the Charterhouse, was employed by Booth to adapt Beaumont and Fletcher's "Knight of the Burning Pestle," which Elkanah transformed to the "City Ramble," Booth playing Rinaldo. Settle was so unpopular at this time, that he brought out his play in the summer season when the town was scantily peopled. The only result was that it was damned by a thin house instead of a crowded one.

At the close of the season Swiney returned to the Opera; Collier to Drury Lane, under a new licence to himself, Wilks, Cibber, and Dogget. Collier withdrew, however, from the management, and the three actors named paid him £700 a year for doing nothing. From this time may be dated the real prosperity of the sole and united company of actors, for whom a halcyon score of years was now beginning. On the other hand, the opera only brought ruin, and drove into exile its able but unlucky manager, Swiney.

[1] Acted six times.

POPE AND DR. GARTH.

CHAPTER XV.

UNION, STRENGTH, PROSPERITY.

NATURALLY and justifiably jubilant is Colley Cibber when giving the history of the united companies. That union led to a prosperity of twenty years, though the union itself did not last so long. We now find houses crowded beyond anything known to that generation; and that not so much from surpassing excellence on the part of the actors, as from their zeal, industry, and the willingness with which they worked together. This success doubled the salaries of the comedians, and "in the twenty years, while we were our own directors," says Colley, with honest

pride, "we never had a creditor that had occasion to come twice for his bill; every Monday morning discharged us of all demands, before we took a shilling for our own use."

These halcyon days had, no doubt, their little passing clouds; some prejudices and jealousies would arise among the leaders, as excellence began to manifest itself from below; but these, as Cibber remarks, with a lofty philosophy, were "frailties, which societies of a higher consideration, while they are composed of men, will never be entirely free from." Cibber and his fellows deserved to prosper. Although they enjoyed a monopoly they did not abuse it; and £1500 profit to each of the three managers, in one year, the greatest sum ever yet so realised on the English stage, showed what might be done, without the aid of "those barbarous entertainments," of acrobats and similar personages, for which the dignified Cibber had the most profound and wholesome horror.

While the management was in the hands of Cibber, Wilks, and Dogget, the good temper of the first was imperturbable. He yielded, or seemed to yield, to the hot hastiness of Wilks, and lent himself to the captious waywardness of Dogget. However impracticable the latter was, Cibber always left a way open to reconciliation. In the very bitterest of their feuds, "I never failed to give him my hat and '*your servant*,' whenever I met him, neither of which he would ever return for above a year after; but I still persisted in my usual salutation, without observing whether it was civilly received or not." Dogget would sit

sullen and silent, at the same table with Cibber, at Will's—the young gentlemen of the town loitering about the room, to listen to the critics, or look at the actors—and Cibber would treat the old player with deference, till the latter was graciously pleased to be softened, and ask for a pinch from Colley's box, in token of reconciliation.

Almost the only word approaching to complaint advanced by Cibber refers to public criticism. The newspapers, and especially *Mist's Journal*, he says, "took upon them very often to censure our management, with the same freedom and severity as if we had been so many ministers of state." This is thoroughly Cibberian in humour and expression. For these critics, however, Colley had a supreme contempt. Wilks and Booth, who succeeded Dogget, were more sensitive, and would fain have made reply; but Cibber remarked that the noise made by the critics was a sign of the ability and success of the management. If we were insignificant, said he, and played only to empty houses, these fellows would be silent.

When the fashion of patronising the folly of pantomimes came in, Cibber reluctantly produced one at Drury Lane, but only "as crutches to the plays." In the regular drama itself, it seemed immaterial to him what he acted, so that the piece was well supported; and accordingly when the "Orphan" was revived, and the town had just been falsely told that Cibber was dead, "I quietly stole myself," he says, "into the part of the Chaplain, which I had not been seen in for many years before;" and as the audience

received him with delight, Colley was satisfied and triumphant.

In the first season the poets were less successful than the players; Johnson's "Wife's Relief,"[1] and Mrs. Centlivre's "Perplexed Lovers," were failures. But the lady fell with some *éclat*. The epilogue produced more sensation than the play. Prince Eugene was then in England, and to Mrs. Oldfield were entrusted lines complimentary to the military talents of the Prince, and his brother in arms, the Duke of Marlborough. Political feuds were then so embittered, that the managers were afraid to allow the epilogue to be spoken; but on the second night, they fortified themselves by the Chamberlain's licence, and brave Mistress Oldfield delivered it, in spite of menacing letters addressed to her. The piece fell; but the authoress printed it, with a tribute of rhymed homage to the prince, who acknowledged the same by sending her a handsome and heavy gold snuff-box, with this inscription:—"The present of his Highness Prince Eugene of Savoy to Susanna Centlivre." Those heavy boxes—some of them furnished with a tube and spring for shooting the snuff up the nose, were then in fashion, and prince could hardly give more fitting present to poetess than a snuff-box, for which—

> "Distant climes their various arts employ,
> To adorn and to complete the modish toy.
> Hinges with close-wrought joints from Paris come,
> Pictures dear bought from Venice and from Rome.
> * * * * *

[1] Acted about seven times. In second edition Dr. Doran quotes a letter from Cromwell to Pope in which is stated that this play brought Johnson £300.

Some think the part too small of modish sand,
Which at a niggard pinch they can command.
Nor can their fingers for that task suffice,
Their nose too greedy, not their hand too nice,
To such a height with these is fashion grown,
They feed their very nostrils with a spoon."

So sang the Rev. Samuel Wesley, in his somewhat indelicate satire on snuff, addressed to his sister, Keziah. Mrs. Centlivre's box probably figured at Drury Lane, and in very good company, with other boxes carried by ladies; for, says the poet—

"They can enchant the fair to such degree,
Scarce more admired could French romances be,
Scarce scandal more beloved or darling flattery;
Whether to th' India House they take their way,
Loiter i' the Park, or at the toilet stay,
Whether at church they shine, or sparkle at the play."

The great night of this season was that in which Philips' version of Racine's "Andromaque" was played,—the 17th of March, 1712. Of the "Distressed Mother," the following was the original cast:—Orestes, Powell; Pyrrhus, Booth; Pylades, Mills; Andromache, Mrs. Oldfield; Hermione, Mrs. Porter. The English piece is even duller than the French one; but there is great scope in it for good declamatory actors, and Booth especially led the town on this night to see in him the undoubted successor of Betterton.

All that could be done to render success assured, was done on this occasion, not only by the poet, but by his friends. Before the tragedy was acted, the *Spectator* informed the public that a masterpiece was

about to be represented. On the first night, there was a packed audience of hearty supporters. During the run of the play,[1] the *Spectator* related the effect the tender tale had had on Sir Roger de Coverley.

We learn from Addison, in the puff preliminary, that at the reading of the "Distressed Mother," by one of the actors,—the players, who listened, were moved to tears, and that the reader, in his turn, was so overcome by his emotions, "that he was frequently obliged to lay down the book, and pause, to recover himself and give vent to the humanity which rose in him at some irresistible touches of the imagined sorrow." On the first night of its being played, the performance was said to be "at the desire of several ladies of quality." Sir Roger de Coverley, with Will Honeycombe and Captain Sentry, backed by two or three old servants,—the Captain wearing the sword he had wielded at Steinkirk, are described as being in the pit, early—four o'clock—before the house was full and the candles were lighted. There was access then for the public for a couple of hours before the curtain rose. The Knight thought the King of France could not strut it more imposingly than Booth in Pyrrhus. He found the plot so ingeniously complicated, that he could not guess how it would end, or what would become of Pyrrhus. His sympathies oscillated between the ladies, with a word of smart censure now and then for either; calling Andromache a perverse widow, and anon, Hermione "a notable young baggage." Turgid as this English

[1] Acted about nine times.

adaptation now seems,—to Addison, its simplicity was one of its great merits. "Why!" says Sir Roger, "there is not a single sentence in the play that I don't know the meaning of!" It was listened to with a "very remarkable silence and stillness," broken only by the applause; and a compliment is paid to Mills who played Pylades, in the remark, "though he speaks but little, I like the old fellow in whiskers as well as any of them."

The epilogue, spoken by Mrs. Oldfield, and undoing all the soft emotions wrought by the tragedy, was repeated twice, for several consecutive nights. The audience could not have enough of it, and long years after, they called for it, whenever the piece was revived. Budgell was the reputed author, but Tonson printed it, with Addison's name as the writer. The latter, however, ordered that of Budgell to be restored, "that it might add weight to the solicitation which he was then making for a place."

Thus Ambrose Philips showed that he could write something more vigorous than the Pastorals, which had given him a name while at the University. He took higher rank among the wits at Button's Coffee-house, and had no reason to fear the censure or ridicule of men like Henry Carey, who fastened upon him the name of Namby Pamby. Success made the author not less solemn, but more pompous. He wore the sword, which he could boldly use, although his foes called him Quaker Philips—with an air; and the successful author of a new tragedy could become arrogant enough to hang a rod up at Button's, and

threaten Pope with a degrading application of it, for having expressed contempt of the author's Pastorals.[1]

Whatever may be thought of this, Rowe and Philips were the first authors of the last century who wrote tragedies which have been played in our own times. But a greater than either was rising; for Addison was giving the last touches to "Cato;" and he, with Steele and others, was imparting his views and ideas on the subject to favourite actors over tavern dinners.

At the close of this season, was finished the brief career of an actor, who was generally considered to possess rare talents, but who was variously judged of by such competent judicial authority as Steele and Cibber. I allude to Richard Estcourt. His London career as a player lasted little more than half a dozen years, during which he distinguished himself by creating Serjeant Kite and Sir Francis Gripe. Downes asserts that he was a born actor. Steele mournfully says, "If I were to speak of merit neglected, misapplied, or misunderstood, might I not say that Estcourt has a great capacity? but it is not the interest of those who bear a figure on the stage that his talents were understood. It is their business to impose upon him what cannot become him, or keep out of his hands anything in which he could shine." Chetwood alludes to his habit of interpolating jokes and catches of his own, which raised a laugh among the general public, but which made critics frown. Cibber has been accused of being unjust to him, but

[1] This story is not true. (Second edition).

Colley's judgment seems to be rendered with his usual fairness, lucidity, and skill.

"This man," says Cibber in his *Apology*, "was so amazing and extraordinary a mimic, that no man or woman, from the coquette to the privy-counsellor, ever moved or spoke before him, but he could carry their voice, look, mien, and motion, instantly into another company. I have heard him make long harangues and form various arguments, even in the manner of thinking, of an eminent pleader at the bar, with every the least article and singularity of his utterance so perfectly imitated that he was the very *alter ipse*, scarce to be distinguished from his original. Yet more, I have seen upon the margin of the written part of Falstaff, which he acted, his own notes and observations upon almost every speech of it, describing the true spirit of the humour, and with what tone of voice, with what look or gesture, each of them ought to be delivered. Yet in his execution upon the stage, he seemed to have lost all those just ideas he had formed of it, and almost through the character he laboured under a heavy load of flatness. In a word, with all his skill in mimicry, and knowledge of what ought to be done, he never upon the stage could bring it truly into practice, but was, upon the whole, a languid, unaffecting actor."

His Kite, however, is said to have been full of lively, dashing, natural humour. Off the stage, Estcourt's society was eagerly sought for, and he was to be met in the best company, where, on festive nights, he recited, gave his imitations, and was not too proud

to pocket his guerdon. The old Duke of Marlborough gladly held fellowship with Estcourt, and as the latter occasionally got guerdon out of the Duke, he must have been a great and very affecting actor indeed. It was probably his spirit of good fellowship which induced him to leave the stage (in 1711) for another calling. This change was sufficiently important for the *Spectator* to notice, with a fine bit of raillery, too: —"Estcourt has lain in, at the Bumper, Covent Garden, neat, natural wines, to be sold wholesale, as well as retail, by his old servant, trusty Anthony (Aston). As Estcourt is a person altogether unknowing in the wine trade, it cannot but be doubted that he will deliver the wine in the same natural purity that he receives it from the merchants," &c.

On the foundation of the "Beef Steak Club," Estcourt was appointed *Providore;* and in the exercise of this office to the chief wits and leading men of the nation, he wore a small gold gridiron, suspended round his neck by a green silk riband. Dr. King alludes to the company, their qualities, and the dignity of the ex-actor, in his *Art of Cookery:*

> "He that of honour, wit, and mirth partakes,
> May be a fit companion o'er beef steaks.
> His name may be to future times unrolled,
> In Estcourt's book, whose gridiron's made of gold."

Estcourt died in 1712, and was buried in the "yard" of St. Paul's, Covent Garden. Near him lie Kynaston and Wycherley, Susanna Centlivre, Wilks, Macklin, and other once vivacious stage celebrities of later times.

I have already had to notice, and shall have to do so again, the despotic power exercised by the Lord Chamberlain over theatrical affairs. One of the most remarkable instances presents itself this year, in connection with the Opera House, indeed, but still illustrative of my subject. John Hughes, who will subsequently appear as a dramatic author, of purer pretensions, had written the words for the composer of "Calypso and Telemachus." A crowd of the "quality," connoisseurs and amateurs, had attend the rehearsal, with which they were so satisfied that a subscription was formed to support the performance of the opera. This aroused the jealousy of the Italian company then in London, who appealed for protection to the Duke of Shrewsbury, the then Chamberlain.

This Duke was the Charles Talbot, in whose house it had been decided that William of Orange should be invited to England, and who, corresponding with James after William was on the throne, had been discovered, and forgiven. He had been loved, it is said, by Queen Mary and the Duchess of Marlborough; but this able, gentle, wayward, and one-eyed statesman, was at this present time the husband of an Italian lady, and on this fact, albeit she was not a *dulcis uxor*, the Italian singers founded their hopes. As the lady's brother was hanged at Tyburn, half a dozen years later, for murdering his servant, Shrewsbury had no great cause, ultimately, to be proud of the connexion. Nevertheless, it served the purpose of the foreign vocalists, it would seem, as the Chamberlain protected

their interests, and issued an order for the suppression of the subscription, adding, that the doors must be opened at the lowest playhouse prices, or not at all. Even under this discouragement the opera was played with success, and was subsequently revived, with good effect, at Lincoln's Inn Fields.

Romantic drama, light, bustling comedy, with less vice and not much less wit than of old, and the severest classical tragedy, challenged the favour of the town in the Drury Lane season of 1712–13. Severe tragedy won the wreath from its competitors.

First on the list was fat Charles Johnson, who was even a more frequent lounger at Button's than Ambrose Philips, and who had a play ready for representation every year and a half. It is a curious fact, that his "Successful Pirate," a sort of melodrama, in five acts, the scene in Madagascar, and the action made up of fighting and wooing, aroused the ire of the virtuous Dennis. This censor wrote to the Lord Chamberlain, complaining that in such a piece as the above the stage was prostituted, villainy encouraged, and the theatre disgraced; that same theatre where, a few nights previously, had been acted the "Old Batchelor," and the "Committee," which some people, like Sir Roger, considered a "good Church of England comedy." The piece, however, made no impression; nor was much greater effected by that learned proctor, Taverner's "French Advocates," [1] nor by the farcical "Humours of the Army," which the ex-soldier Charles Shadwell had partly constructed out of his own mili-

[1] Should be "Female Advocates."

tary reminiscences, as he sat at his desk in the Revenue Office at Dublin.

Equally indifferent were the public to a comedy called the "Wife of Bath," written by a young man who had been a mercer's apprentice in the Strand, and who was now house-steward and man of business to the widowed Duchess of Monmouth at her residence, no longer in the mansion on the south side of Soho Square, about to be turned into auction rooms, but in fresh, pure, rustic, Hedge Lane, which now, as Whitcombe Street, lacks all freshness, purity, and rusticity. The young man's name was Gay; but it was not on this occasion that he was to make it famous.

In stern tragedy, the "Heroic Daughter," founded on Corneille's "Cid," wrung no tears,[1] and "Cinna's Conspiracy" raised no emotions. The sole success of the season in this line was Addison's "Cato," first played on the 14th of April, 1713; thus cast: Cato, Booth; Syphax, Cibber; Juba, Wilks; Portius, Powell; Sempronius, Mills; Marcus, Ryan; Decius, Boman; Lucius, Keen; Marcia, Mrs. Oldfield; Lucia, Mrs. Porter.

Of the success of this tragedy, a compound of transcendent beauties and absurdity, I shall speak, when treating of Booth, apart. It established that actor as the great master of his art, and it brought into notice young Ryan, the intelligent son of an Irish tailor, a good actor, and a true gentleman. "Cato" had the good fortune to be represented by a band of superior

[1] Yet it was played about eight times.

actors, who had been enlightened by the instruction of Addison, and stimulated, at rehearsals, by the sarcasm of Swift. Factions united in applause; purses—not bouquets—were presented to the chief actor, and the Cato night was long one of the traditions about which old players loved to entertain all listeners,

While thus new glories were rising, old ones were fading away or dying out. Long-nosed Tom Durfey was poor enough to be grateful for a benefit given in his behalf, the proceeds of which furnished him with a fresh supply of sack, and strengthened him to new attempt at song. About the same time died the last of the actors of the Cromwellian times, Will Peer, one who was qualified by nature to play the Apothecary in "Romeo and Juliet," and by intelligence to deliver with well-feigned humility the players' prologue to the play in "Hamlet," but whom old age, good living, and success rendered too fat for the first and too jolly for the second.

In the season of 1713–14, Booth was associated in the licence which Wilks, Cibber, and Dogget held at the Queen's pleasure. Dogget withdrew on a pecuniary arrangement, agreed upon after some litigation, and the theatre was in the hands of the other three eminent actors. The old pieces of this season were admirably cast; of the new pieces which were failures it is not necessary to speak, but of two which have been played with success from that time down to the last year, some notice is required. I allude to Rowe's "Jane Shore," and Mrs. Centlivre's "Wonder." The tragedy was written after the

poet had ceased to be Under-Secretary to the Duke of Queensberry, and after he had studied Spanish, in hopes of a foreign appointment through Halifax, who, according to the story, only congratulated him on being able to read Don Quixote in the original! "Jane Shore" was brought out, February 2, 1714. Hastings, Booth; Dumont, Wilks; Glo'ster, Cibber; Jane Shore, Mrs. Oldfield; Alicia, Mrs. Porter. A greater contrast to "Cato" could not have been devised than this domestic tragedy, wherein all the unities are violated, the language is familiar, and the chief incidents the starving of a repentant wife, and the generosity of an exceedingly forgiving husband. The audience, which was stirred by the patriotism of "Cato," was moved to delicious tears by the sufferings and sorrow of Jane Shore, whose character Rowe has elevated in order to secure for her the suffrages of his hearers. The character was a triumph for Mrs. Oldfield, who had been trained to a beautiful reading of her part by Rowe himself, who was unequalled as a reader by any poet save Lee; and "Jane Shore," as a success, ranked only next to "Cato." The third, sixth, and tenth nights were for the author's benefit. On the first two the boxes and pit "were laid together," admission half-a-guinea; the third benefit was "at common prices."

Much expectation had been raised by this piece, and it was realised to the utmost. It was otherwise with the "Wonder," from which little was expected, but much success ensued.[1] The sinning wife and

[1] It was acted only six times.

moaning husband of the tragedy were the lively lady and the quick-tempered lover of this comedy. The Violante of Mrs. Oldfield and the Don Felix of Wilks were talked of in every coffee-house. The wits about the door, and the young poets in the back room at the new house set up by Button, talked as vivaciously about it as their rivals at Tom's, on the opposite side of the way; and every prophecy they made of the success of the comedy in times to come, does credit to them as soothsayers.

The death of Queen Anne, on the 1st of August 1714, cannot be said to have prematurely closed the summer season of this year. However, the actors mourned for a month, and then a portion of them played joyously enough, for a while, in Pinkethman's booth, at Southwark Fair.

At this period the stage lost a lady who was as dear to it as Queen Anne, namely, Mrs. Bradshaw. Her departure, however, was caused by marriage, not by death; and the gentleman who carried her off, instead of being a rollicking gallant, or a worthless peer, was a staid, solemn, worthy antiquary, Martin Folkes, who rather surprised the town by wedding young Mistress Bradshaw. The lady had been on the stage about eighteen years; she had trodden it from early childhood, and always with unblemished reputation. She had her reward in an excellent, sensible, and wealthy husband, to whom her exemplary and prudent conduct endeared her; and the happiness of this couple was well established. Probably, when Martin was away on Friday evenings, at the Young Devil Tavern,

where the members of the Society of Antiquaries met, upon "pain of forfeiture of sixpence," Mrs. Folkes sat quietly at home, thinking without sadness of the bygone times when she won applause as the originator of the characters of Corinna, in the "Conspirator,"[1] Sylvia, in the "Double Gallant," and Arabella Zeal, in the "Fair Quaker." In other respects, Mistress Bradshaw is one of the happy, honest women who have no history.

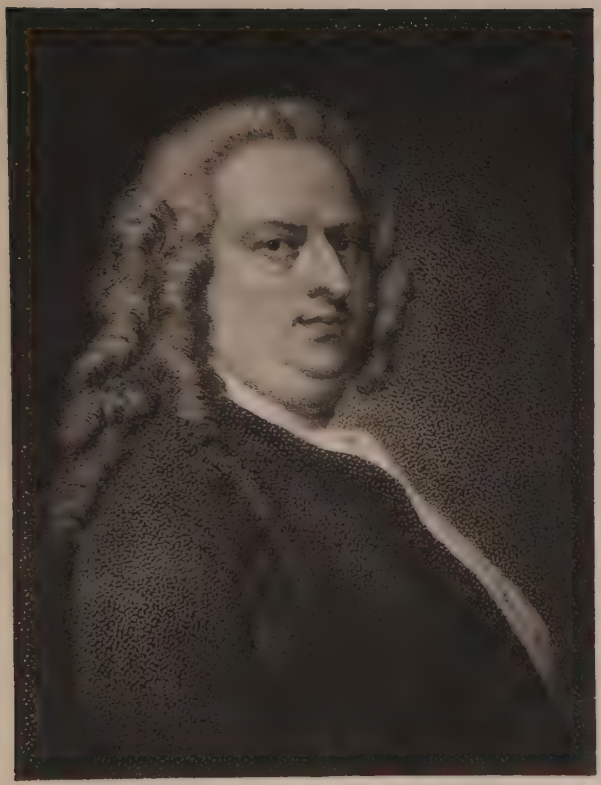
If the age of Queen Anne was not quite so fully the golden age of authors as it has been supposed to be, it was still remarkable for a patronage of literature hitherto unparalleled. Addison, Congreve, Gay, Ambrose Philips, Rowe, were among the dramatic authors who, with men of much humbler pretensions, held public offices, were patronised by the great, or lived at their ease. With the death of this Queen, the patent or licence, held by Wilks, Cibber, Booth, and Dogget, died also. In the new licence, Steele, who, since we last met with him at the play had endured variety of fortune, was made a partner. He had married that second wife whom he treated so politely in his little failures of allegiance. He had established the *Tatler*, co-operated in the *Spectator*, had begun and terminated the *Guardian*, and had started the *Englishman*. He had served the Duke of Marlborough in and out of office, and had been elected M.P. for Stockbridge, after nobly resigning his Commissionership of Stamps, and his pension as "servant to the late Prince George of Denmark." He had been ex-

[1] Should be "Confederacy."

pelled the House for writing what the House called seditious pamphlets, and had then returned to literature, and now to occupation as a manager. From the new government, under the new king, by whom he was soon after knighted, Steele had influence enough to ultimately obtain a *patent*, in the names of himself, Booth, Wilks, and Cibber, which protected them from some small tyrannies with which they were occasionally visited by the officials in the Lord Chamberlain's office.

The season of 1714–15 was not especially remarkable, save for this, that the great actors who were patentees frequently played small parts, in order to give young actors a chance. It was not given, however, to every young actor; for, on the 20th of April, 1715, when Rowe's "Lady Jane Grey" was produced (Dudley, Booth; Lady Jane, Mrs. Oldfield), the very insignificant part of the Lieutenant of the Tower was played by a new actor from Ireland,—one James Quin, who was destined to equal Booth in some parts, and to be surpassed in some, by an actor yet at school,—David Garrick.

Charles Johnson was, of course, ready with a comedy, stolen from various sources,—"Country Lasses." Gay, who had returned from Hanover with the third Earl of Clarendon, whose secretary he had become, after leaving the service of the Duchess of Monmouth, produced his hilarious burlesque of old and modern tragedies,—the "What d'ye call It?" The satire of this piece was so fine, that deaf gentlemen who saw the tragic action and could not hear



the words, and the new sovereign and court who heard the words but could not understand their sense, were put into great perplexity; while the honest galleries, reached by the solemn sounds, and taking manner for matter, were affected to such tears as they could shed, at the most farcical and high-sounding similes. It was only after awhile that the joke was comprehended, and that the "What d'ye call It?" was seen to be a capital burlesque of "Venice Preserved." The very Templars, who of course comprehended it all, from the first, and went to hiss the piece, for the honour of Otway, could not do so, for laughing; and this only perplexed the more the matter-of-fact people, not so apt to discover a joke.[1]

Rowe's "Lady Jane" did not prove so attractive as "Jane Shore." There were only innocence and calamity wherewith to move the audience; no guilt; no profound intrigue. But there is much force in some of the scenes. The very variety of the latter, indeed, was alleged against the author, as a defect, by the many slaves of the unity of time and place. It was objected to Rowe, that in his violation of the unities he went beyond other offenders,—not only changing the scene with the acts, but varying it within the acts. For this, however, he had good authority in older and better dramatists. "To change the scene, as is done by Rowe, in the middle of an act, is to add more acts to the play; since an act is so much of the business as is transacted without interrup-

[1] Quoted from a humorous account of the piece's reception, written by Pope.

tion. Rowe, by this licence, easily extricates himself from difficulties, as in 'Lady Jane Grey,' when we have been terrified by all the dreadful pomp of public execution, and are wondering how the heroine or poet will proceed; no sooner has Jane pronounced some prophetic rhymes than—pass and be gone—the scene closes, and Pembroke and Gardiner are turned out upon the stage." The critic wished to stay and witness a "public execution," not satisfied with the pathos of the speech uttered by Jane, and which, for tenderness, sets the scene in fine contrast with that of the quarrelling and reconciliation between Pembroke and Guilford. Rowe's Jane Grey interests the heart more fully than Jane Shore or Calista: but the last two ladies have a touch of boldness about them, in which the first, from her very innocence, is wanting; and audiences are, therefore, more excited by the loudly-proclaimed wrongs of the women who have gone astray than by the tender protests of the victim who suffers for the crimes of others.

George Powell ended his seven and twentieth season this year, at the close of which he died. For the old actor gone, a young actress appeared,—Mrs. Horton, "one of the most beautiful women that ever trod the stage." She had been a "stroller," ranting tragedy in barns and country towns, and playing Cupid, in a booth at suburban fairs. The attention of managers was directed towards her; and Booth, after seeing her act in Southwark, engaged her for Drury Lane, where her presence was more agreeable to the public than particularly pleasant to dear Mrs. Oldfield.

SPILLER'S BENEFIT TICKET.

CHAPTER XVI.

COMPETITION, AND WHAT CAME OF IT.

"Augustus," as it was the fashion to call George I., by performing a justifiable act, inflicted some injury this year, by restoring the Letters Patent of Charles II. to Christopher Rich, of which the latter had been deprived, and under which his son, John, opened the revived theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields, on the 18th December 1714, with the "Recruiting Officer." The enlarged stage was "superbly adorned with looking-glasses on both sides;" a circumstance which Quin said "was an excellent trap to such actresses who admired their own persons more than they attended

to the duties of their profession." Some good actors left Drury for the Fields;—Keen, the two Bullocks, Pack, Spiller, Cory, Knap, Mrs. Rogers, and Mrs. Knight. Cibber rather contemptuously says of such of the above as he names, that "they none of them had more than a negative merit,—being able only to do us more harm by leaving us without notice, than they could do us good by remaining with us; for, though the best of them could not support a play, the worst of them, by their absence, could maim it,—as the loss of the least pin in a watch may obstruct its motion."

John Rich's company in the Fields either played old pieces, or adaptations from them, or "from the French"; none of which deserved even a passing word, except a roaring farce—pieces which now grew popular—called "Love in a Sack," by Griffin, whom I notice not as an indifferent author, but as an excellent comedian, who made his first appearance in a double capacity. Griffin may also be noticed under a double qualification. He was a gentleman and a glazier. His father was a Norfolk rector, and had been chaplain to the Earl of Yarmouth,—that gallant Sir Robert Paston, who was in France and Flanders with James, Duke of York. In the Paston Free School, at North Walsham, Griffin learnt his "rudiments," having done which his sire apprenticed him to the useful but not dignified calling of a glazier. The "'prentice lad," disgusted at the humiliation, ran away, took to strolling, found his way, after favourable report, to Rich's theatre, and there proved

so good an actor, that the Drury Lane management ultimately lured him away to a stage where able competitors polished him into still greater brilliancy. The season concluded on the last day of July[1] 1715 with a "benefit for Tim Buck, to release him out of prison."

In the following October, Drury commenced a season which, save a few days of summer vacation, extended to the close of August 1716. During this time, Shakspeare's best plays were frequently acted, old comedies revived with success, and obscure farces played and consigned to oblivion. The great attempt, if not success, of the season, was the comedy of the "Drummer, or the Haunted House," first played in March 1716, and not known to be Addison's till Steele published the fact after the author's death. Tonson, however, knew or suspected the truth, for he gave £50 for the copyright. Wilks, Cibber, Mills, and Mrs. Oldfield could not secure a triumph for the play—which Steele thought was more disgraceful to the stage than to the comedy. There is a novel mixture of sentiment, caricature, and farcical incident in this piece. Warton describes it as "a just picture of life and real manners; where the poet never speaks in his own person, or totally drops or forgets a character, for the sake of introducing a brilliant simile or acute remark; where no train is laid for wit, no Jeremys or Bens are suffered to appear." More natural, it was less brilliant than the artificial comedies of Congreve; but its failure

[1] Should be August.

probably vexed the author, as it certainly annoyed the publisher. Tickell omitted it from his edition of Addison's works, but Steele gave these reasons for ascribing it to the latter; they are a little confused, but they probably contain the truth:—"If I remember right, the fifth act was written in a week's time. . . . He would walk about his room, and dictate in language with as much freedom and ease as any one could write it down. . . . I have been often thus employed by him. . . . I will put all my credit among men of wit, for the truth of my averment, when I presume to say, that no one but Mr. Addison was in any other way the writer of the 'Drummer.' . . . At the same time, I will allow that he has sent for me . . . and told me, that 'a gentleman, then in the room, had written a play that he was sure I would like; but it was to be a secret; and he knew I would take as much pains, since he recommended it, as I would for him.'"

At Lincoln's Inn Fields, the season of 1715–16 had this of remarkable in it, that John Rich revived the "Prophetess," as it enabled him to display his ability in the introduction and management of machinery, and his success in raising the prices of admission. Bullock's farce, the "Cobbler of Preston," was begun on a Friday, finished the next day, and played on the Tuesday following—in order to anticipate Charles Johnson's farce,—like this, derived from the introduction to the "Taming of the Shrew," at Drury Lane. Of the other plays—one, the "Fatal Vision," was written by Aaron Hill, who, having lost property and

temper in a project how to extract olive oil from beech-nuts, endeavoured to inculcate in his piece the wrongfulness of giving way to rash designs and evil passions. This play he dedicated to the two most merciless critics of the day, Dennis and Gildon. Then of the "Perfidious Brother," it is only to be stated that it was a bad play stolen by young Theobald from Mestayer, a watchmaker, who had lent him the manuscript. That an attorney should have the reprehensible taste to steal a worthless play seemed a slur upon the lawyer's judgment. Another new play, the "Northern Heiress," by Mrs. Davys, a clergyman's widow, but now the lively Irish mistress of a Cambridge coffee-house, reminds me of the five-act farces of Reynolds, with its fops, fools, half-pay officers, fast gentlemen, and flippant ladies. There are ten people married at the end, a compliment to matrimony, at the hands of the widow; but there is a slip in poetical justice; for, a lover who deserts his mistress, when he finds, as Lord Peterborough did of Miss Moses, that her fortune was not equal to his expectations, marries her, after discovering that he was mistaken.

Herewith we come to the Drury Lane season of 1716–17. Booth, Wilks, and Cibber had a famous company, in which Quin quietly made his way to the head,[1] and Mrs. Horton's beauty acted with good effect on Mrs. Oldfield. In the way of novelty, Mrs. Centlivre produced a tragedy, the "Cruel Gift," in which nobody dies, and lovers are happily married.

[1] Quin can hardly be said to have been even near the head of this company.

The most notable affair, however, was the comedy, "Three Hours after Marriage," in which Gay, Pope, and Arbuthnot, three grave men, who pretended to instruct and improve mankind, insulted modesty, virtue, and common decency, in the grossest way, by speech or inuendo. There is not so much filth in any other comedy of this century, and the trio of authors stand stigmatised for their attempt to bring in the old corruption. In strange contrast we have Mrs. Manley, a woman who began life with unmerited misfortune, and carried it on with unmitigated profligacy, producing a highly moral, semi-religious drama, "Lucius."

But while moral poets were polluting the stage, and immoral women undertaking to purify it, a reverend Archdeacon of Stowe, the historian, Lawrence Echard, in conjunction with Lestrange, put on the stage of Drury Lane, a translation of the "Eunuchus" of Terence. It did not survive the third night; but the audience might have remarked how much more refinedly the Carthaginian of old could treat a delicate subject than the Christian poets of a later era—or, to speak correctly, than the later poets of a Christian era.

In this season I find the first trace of a "fashionable night," and a later hour for beginning the play than any of subsequent times. I quote from Genest:—"18 June, 1717. By particular desire of several Ladies of Quality. 'Fatal Marriage.' Biron, Booth; Villeroy, Mills; Isabella, Mrs. Porter; Victoria, Mrs. Younger. An exact computation being made of the number which the Pit and Boxes will hold, they are laid together; and no person can be admitted without

tickets. By desire, the play is not to begin till nine o'clock, by reason of the heat of the weather—nor the house to be opened till eight." What a change from the time when Dryden's Lovely exclaimed :—

"As punctual as three o'clock at the playhouse!"

The corresponding season (1716–17) at Lincoln's Inn requires but brief notice. Rich, who had failed in attempting Essex, played, as Mr. Lun, Harlequin, in the "Cheats, or the Tavern Bilkers," a ballet-pantomime—the forerunner of the line of pantomime which, notwithstanding our presumed advance in civilisation, still has its admirers. In novelty, Dick Leveridge, the singer, produced the burlesque of "Pyramus and Thisbe"—those parts being played by himself and Pack, with irresistible comic effect, especially when caricaturing the style of the Italian opera, where your hero died in very good time and tune. English opera was not altogether neglected in the Fields, but little was accomplished in the way of upholding the drama. Bullock produced a comedy, which he was accused of stealing from a manuscript by Savage—"Woman's a Riddle." It is a long, coarse farce, in which the most decent incident is the hanging of Sir Amorous Vainwit, from a balcony, as he is trying to escape in woman's clothes, which are caught by a hook, and beneath which a footman stands with a flambeau. We learn, too, from this comedy, that young ladies carried snuff-boxes in those days.

Taverner, the proctor, also produced a comedy quite as extravagant, and not a whit less immoral

than Bullock's—the "Artful Husband." It had, however, great temporary success, quite enough to turn the author's head, and by his acts to show that there was nothing in it.

The "Artful Husband," however, brought into notice a young actor who had but a small part to play,—Stockwell. His name was Spiller. The Duke of Argyle thought, and spoke well of him before this. On the night in question, Spiller, who dressed his characters like an artist, went through his first scenes exquisitely, and without being recognised by his patron, who came behind the scenes, and had recommended him warmly to the notice of Rich. Genest says he hopes this story is true. I am sure it is not improbable; and for this reason. I once saw Lafont acting the Son in "Père et Fils." Opposite to the side on which he made his exit an aged actor, who represented the father, passed me. I was delighted with the truth and beauty of his acting, and at the end of the scene asked who he was. To my astonishment, I heard that Lafont, whom I had well known as an actor for more than twenty years, was playing both parts. This identifying power was Spiller's distinguishing merit. Riccoboni saw the young actor play an old man with a perfectness not to be expected but from players of the longest experience. "How great was my surprise," says Riccoboni, "when I learnt that he was a young man, about the age of twenty-six. I could not believe it; but owned that it might be possible, had he only used a broken and a trembling voice, and had only an extreme weakness possessed his body, because

I conceived that a young actor might, by the help of art, imitate that debility of nature to such a pitch of excellence; but the wrinkles of his face, his sunk eyes, and his loose yellow cheeks, the most certain marks of age, were incontestible proofs against what they said to me. Notwithstanding all this, I was forced to submit to truth, because I was credibly informed that the actor, to fit himself for the part of this old man, spent an hour in dressing himself, and disguised his face so nicely, and painted so artificially a part of his eyebrows and eyelids, that at the distance of six paces it was impossible not to be deceived."

In the next season, at Drury (1717–18), the only remarkable piece produced was Cibber's adaptation of "Tartuffe," under the name of the "Nonjuror." In the lustre of the "Nonjuror" paled and died out the first play by Savage, "Love in a Veil." Not twenty years had elapsed since this luckless and heartless young vagabond was born, in Fox Court, Gray's Inn Lane, his unknown mother, but not that light lady, the Countess of Macclesfield, wearing a mask. Savage had passed from a shoemaker's shop to the streets, had written a poem on the Bangorian Controversy, had adapted a play translated from the Spanish, by the wife of Mr. Baron Price, and which Bullock re-adapted and produced at Drury Lane before Savage could get his own accepted. "Love in a Veil" seems to have been founded on an incident in the Spanish comedy; but however this may be, it failed to obtain the public approval. The author, however, did not altogether fail; generous Wilks patronised the boy,

and Steele, befriending a lad of parts, designed to give him £1000, which he had not got, with the hand of a natural daughter, whom the young and wayward poet did not get. The "Nonjuror" alone survives as a memorial of the Drury season of 1717–18.

We owe the piece to fear and hatred of the Pope and the Pretender. It addressed itself to so wide a public that Lintot gave the liberal sum of a hundred guineas for the copyright, and it was so acceptable to the King that he gave a dedication fee of twice that number of guineas to the author, who addressed him as "dread Sir," and spoke of himself as "the lowest of your subjects from the theatre." Cibber adds, "Your comedians, Sir, are an unhappy society, whom some severe heads think wholly useless, and others, dangerous to the young and innocent. This comedy is, therefore, an attempt to remove that prejudice, and to show what honest and laudable uses may be made of the theatre, when its performances keep close to the true purposes of its institution." Cibber goes on to remark, that perhaps the idly and seditiously inclined may cease to disturb their brains about embarrassing the government, if "proper amusements" be provided for them. For such his play is rather a chastisement than an amusement, and he thinks *that* would have been all the better taken had it not been administered by a comedian. The Nonjurors, whose allegiance was paid to the Pretender, were perhaps not worthy of a more exalted scourger; but he fears that truth and loyalty demanded a nobler champion. He flatteringly alludes to the small num-

ber of malcontents. His piece had either crushed them, or their forces were not so great as supposed, "there being no assembly where people are so free, and apt to speak their minds, as in a crowded theatre, of which," says the courtly fellow, "your Majesty may have lately seen an instance in the insuppressible acclamations that were given on your appearing to honour this play with your royal presence."

On the night of representation, Rowe, in a prologue—he was now Poet Laureate and Land Surveyor of the Customs in the Port of London, deprecated the piece being considered unjustifiably discourteous.

> "Think not our colours may too strongly paint
> The stiff non-juring separation saint.
> Good breeding ne'er commands us to be civil
> To those who give the nation to the devil!"

The play was admirably acted by Booth, Colonel Woodvil; Mills, Sir John; Wilks, Heartley; Cibber, Dr. Wolf (the Cantwell of the modern arrangement); and Walker (soon to be famous as Captain Macheath), Charles. Mrs. Porter played Lady Woodvil, and Mrs. Oldfield turned the heads and touched the hearts of all lively and susceptible folks by her exquisite coquetry, in Maria. The play was not a servile imitation of, but an excellent adaptation to modern circumstances of, the "Tartuffe." Thoroughly English, it abounds with the humour and manner of Cibber, and despite some offences against taste, it was at this time the purest comedy on the stage. There was farce enough for the gallery, maxim and repartee, suggestions and didactic phrases for the rest of the

house. The success surpassed even expectation. It raised against Cibber a phalanx of implacable foes—foes who howled at everything of which he was, afterwards, the author; but it gained for him his advancement to the poet-laureateship, and an estimation which caused some people to place him, for usefulness to the cause of true religion, on an equality with the author of "The Whole Duty of Man!" Cibber foresaw the tempest, and, probably, also the prosperous gales which were to follow, to which there is some allusion in the Epilogue spoken by Mrs. Oldfield, which, of course, had a fling against marriage :—

> "Was 't not enough that critics might pursue him?
> But must he rouse a party to undo him?
> These blows, I told him, on his plays would fall:
> But he, unmov'd, cried, ——'s blood! we'll stand it all!"

In the theatre itself the opposition to the piece was confined, Cibber says, to "a few smiles of silent contempt. As the satire was chiefly employed on the enemies of the Government, they were not so hardy as to own themselves such, by any higher disapprobation or resentment." They made up for this constrained silence, as above noted, and *Mist's Journal*, for fifteen years, lost no opportunity of mauling the detested offender. With the editor of that paper, says Cibber, "though I could never persuade my wit to have an open account with him (for, as he had no effects of his own, I did not think myself obliged to answer his bills), notwithstanding, I will be so charitable to his real *manes*, and to the ashes of his paper, as to mention one particular civility he paid to my memory

after he thought he had ingeniously killed me. Soon after the 'Nonjuror' had received the favour of the town, I read in one of his journals the following short paragraph:—'Yesterday died Mr. Colley Cibber, late comedian of the Theatre Royal, notorious for writing the *Nonjuror*.' The compliment, in the latter part, I confess," adds Cibber, "I did not dislike, because it came from so impartial a judge."

The stage lost this year an excellent actor, Irish Bowen, who, at the age of fifty-two, was slain in duel by young Quin.[1] Hitherto the sword had dealt lightly with actors. In 1692, indeed, Sandford nearly killed Powell, on the stage. On the 13th of October they were acting together, in "Œdipus, King of Thebes," when the former, to whom a real dagger had been delivered by the property-man, instead of a weapon, the blade of which run up, when the point was pressed, into the handle, gave poor Powell a stab three inches deep; the wound was, at first, thought to be mortal, but Powell recovered. Five years later, in July 1697, I find brief mention in the papers of a duel between an actor and an officer. The initials only of the principals are given: "Mr. H., an actor, of Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre, fought Mr. D., an officer, at Barnes Elms." Whether the former was young Hodgson or young Harris is not now to be determined, nor the grounds of the quarrel. The issue of it was that the player dangerously wounded the soldier; and it is added, that both parties exhibited brilliant courage.

[1] See page 175 for some curious facts relating to this.

Bowen was the original representative of Sir Joshua[1] Wittol ("Old Batchelor"), Jeremy ("Love for Love"), and Foigard ("Beaux' Stratagem").

Quin passed over to Lincoln's Inn Fields in this season of 1717-18, where he played Hotspur, Tamerlane, Morat ("Aurungzebe"), Mark Antony, and created the part of Scipio, in the "Scipio Africanus," written by young Beckingham, the pride of Merchant Tailors' School. Beckingham must also have been the pride of Fleet Street, and especially of the craft of linen-drapers, of which his father was a worthy and well-to-do member. The piece was played on the 18th of February 1718. The author was then but nineteen years of age, and was full of bright promise. A tragedy by one so young, excited the public, and most especially the juvenile public, at Merchant Tailors', where Dr. Smith was head-master. The Doctor and sub-masters held the stage in abhorrence till now, when a brilliant *alumnus* was likely to shed lustre on the corporation of "Merchant Tailors and Linen Armourers." Now they proclaimed high jubilee, gave the lads a half-holiday on the author's night, and joyfully saw the whole school swarming to the pit of Lincoln's Inn, to uphold the tragedy by this honoured *condiscipulus*. The masters, in this, acted against their own former precept and example; but they made amends for it by religious zeal, and by expelling all the Jewish pupils from the school! Israel was the scapegoat, and the Christian sense of propriety was gratified.

[1] Sir Joseph.

But Quin's Scipio established a taste for theatricals at Merchant Tailors', where classical plays were acted, for some years, as at Westminster. Beckingham's tragedy exhibits a romantic story, or stories, in a classical costume. There is severity enough to gratify rigid tastes, with a little of over-warmth of action on the part of one of three lovers, which shows that the young poet was not unread in the older masters.

But there were worse and better plays than "Scipio" brought out on the same stage this season. Taverner failed in a *pendant* to his "Artful Husband," the "Artful Wife." Bullock did little for the credit of the stage by his farce of the "Perjuror," and Sir Thomas Moore justly criticised his own tragedy of "Mangora, King of the Timbusians," when he called it a "trifle." It is a very noisy trifle, concerned with love, battle, murder, and worse, between the Spaniards and South American Indians. Rich thought its bustle might carry its absurdities successfully through, and Sir Thomas stimulated the actors, when at rehearsal, by inviting them to supper, at which Leigh, the two Bullocks, Williams, Ogden, Knapp, and Giffard, Mistresses Knight, Bullock, and Kent, made a joyous party, as hilarious as the audience was, whose laughter alone prevented them from hissing down the nonsense of an obscure man who was knighted for some forgotten service—certainly not for any rendered to the Muses.

The piece of this season which had stuff in it to cause it to live to our own times, was Mrs. Centlivre's "Bold Stroke for a Wife." Sprightly Mrs. Centlivre

was as fervent a Whig as Cibber, and had written verses enough in praise of Brunswick to entitle her to be Poetess-Laureate, had the Princess Caroline had a voice in the matter, when Rowe died this very year, and Newcastle recommended tipsy Eusden for the office of "birthday fibber." The "Bold Stroke," laughed at and denounced by Wilks, and taken reluctantly in hand by the actors, is a fair specimen of that lighter comedy which borders upon farce, but in which the fun is genuine, and the incidents not so improbable but that they may be accepted, or, by the rapidity of their succession, laughed at and forgotten.

This season, withal, was not successful. It broke the heart of Keen, actor and sharer. In the former capacity, though Savage thought his life worth narrating, he won few laurels,—but his wreath was not entirely leafless. He was loved, too, by his brethren of both houses, whose subscriptions defrayed the expenses of a funeral, at which upwards of two hundred persons walked in deep mourning.[1]

At this time, Drury, with its old, strong company, was patronised by court and town. Plays, acted at Hampton Court, before the King, were repeated in the public theatre. Of the former, I shall speak in a future page. Two new comedies proved, indeed, inferior to Mrs. Centlivre's "Bold Stroke," at the other house. Charles Johnson's "Masquerade," borrowed a little from Shirley, and more from Molière, furnished,

[1] He was buried at St. Clement's. Six actors held the pall.—*Doran MS.*

in Ombre and Lady Frances Ombre, some ideas, probably, to Cibber, when he placed a similar pair on the stage, in Lord and Lady Townley. A worse piece was more successful,—the rambling comedy, "Chit Chat," by a Mr. Thomas Killigrew, a gentleman who, like his namesake, had a place at court, but not his namesake's wit. The courtiers, with the Duke of Argyle at their head, carried the piece through eleven representations, and enriched the treasury by £1000.

The great effort of the season was made in bringing out "Busiris," a tragedy, by the Rev. Dr. Young, author of *Night Thoughts*. It was played on March 7, 1719, by Booth, Elrington, Wilks, Mills, Walker and Thurmond, Mrs. Oldfield and Mrs. Thurmond.

"Busiris" was Young's earliest tragedy. It is written in a stilted and inflated style, and bears all the marks of a juvenile production. The plot of the piece is void of all ingenuity; but there is little that is borrowed in it, save the haughty message sent by Busiris to the Persian Ambassador, which is the same as that returned by the Ethiopian prince to Cambyses, in the third book of Herodotus. Of the phrasing, and indeed of the incidents of this tragedy, Fielding made excellent fun, in his mock tragedy of "Tom Thumb." The sovereigns and courtiers of Egypt gave little trouble to be converted into Arthur and Dollalolla, Noodle, Doodle, the great little prince, and Huncamunca. The travestie is rich and facile; not least so in that passage mimicking the various addresses to the sun, who is bid to rise no more, but hide his face and put the world in mourning, On these, Fielding re-

marks, that "the author of 'Busiris' is extremely anxious to prevent the sun's blushing at any indecent object; and, therefore, on all such occasions, he addresses himself to the sun, and desires him to keep out of the way." It was dedicated to the Duke of Newcastle, the patron of Eusden, the laureat, "because the late instances he had received of his grace's undeserved and uncommon favour, in an affair of some consequence, foreign to the theatre, had taken from him the privilege of choosing a patron." If this favour consisted in rewarding Young for writing for the court, the favour *may* have been "undeserved," but it was by no means "uncommon."

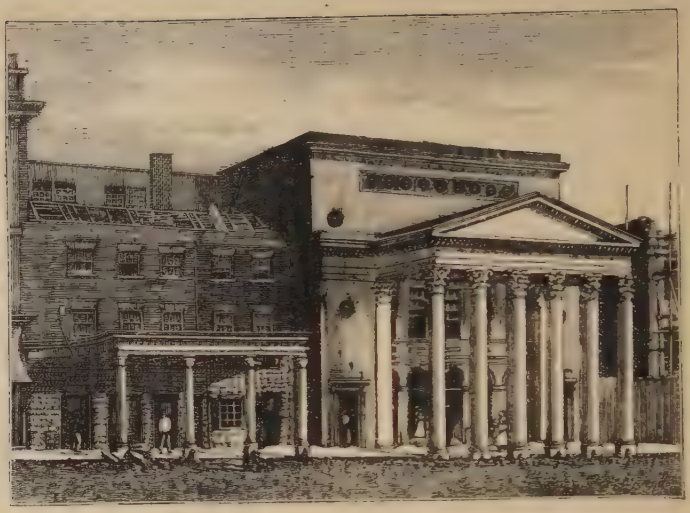
The concluding incident of this play,—the double suicide of Memnon (Wilks) and Mandane (Mrs. Oldfield), found such favour in the author's own estimation, that he repeated it in his next two tragedies, in each of which a couple of lovers make away with themselves. This tripled circumstance reminds a critic of the remark of Dryden:—"The dagger and the bowl are always at hand to butcher a hero, when a poet wants the brains to save him."

Dr. Young was at this time thirty-eight years of age, but was not yet "famous." Born when Charles II. was king and Dryden laureat, the Hampshire godson of the Princess Anne, was as yet only known as having been the friend of the Duke of Wharton, and of Tickell; as having first come before the public in 1713,[1] with a poem to Granville, in which there is good dramatic criticism; and of having

[1] 1712.

since written poems of promise rather than of merit, the latest of which was a paraphrase on part of the book of Job, which, curiously enough, abounds with phrases which show the author's growing intercourse with the playhouse and theatrical people. "Busiris" was written in the year that "Cato" was played, but its performance was delayed till this year, and its dramatic death occurred long before "Cato" departed from the stage,—to be read, at least, as long as an admirer of Addison survives.

Mr. Garrick as Hamlet



THE NEW AND OLD THEATRES ROYAL, HAYMARKET.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE PROGRESS OF JAMES QUIN, AND DECLINE OF BARTON BOOTH.

Quin made great advances in the public favour in the season of 1718–19, at Lincoln's Inn, where, however, as yet, he only shared the leading business in tragedy and comedy with Ryan, and the less distinguished Evans. Southwark Fair, a fashionable resort, contributed to the company a new actor, Bohemia or Boheme, with great comic power; and Susan Mountfort replaced for a few weeks Mrs. Rogers, who had held for a time the tragic parts once acted by Mrs. Barry and Bracegirdle, and who died

about this time. Of Susan Mountfort's touching end I will speak in a future page. Mrs. Rogers had been on the stage since 1692, and numbered among her original parts:—Imoinda, Oriana, Melinda, and Isabinda, in "Oroonoko," "Inconstant," "Recruiting Officer," and "Busy Body."

During this season a French company acted for some time in the Fields, where the "Tartuffe" was also played against the "Nonjuror." The only novelty worthy of notice was the "Sir Walter Raleigh" of poor Dr. Sewell, in which Quin played the hero with indifferent success. The author was more remarkable than his piece. He was of good family, and a pupil of Boerhaave; but, unsuccessful as a practitioner in London, he, curiously enough, gained fortune and reputation in the smaller sphere of Hampstead, until, as a singular biographical notice informs us, "three other physicians settled at the same place, after which his gains became very inconsiderable." He became a poor poet instead of a rich physician; "kept no house, but was a boarder; was much esteemed, and so frequently invited to the tables of gentlemen in the neighbourhood, that he had seldom occasion to dine at home." Seven years after Quin failed to lift him into dramatic notoriety, this Tory opponent of the Whig Bishop of Salisbury, and one of the minor contributors (it is said) to the *Spectator* and *Tatler*, though he is not included in Bissett's lives of the writers in the first-named periodical, died, "and was supposed," says the anonymous biographer already quoted, "at that time to be in very indigent circum-

stances, as he was interred in the meanest manner, his coffin being little better than those allotted by the parish to their poor who are buried from the workhouses, neither did a single friend or relation attend him to the grave. No memorial was placed over his remains; but they lie just under a holly-tree, which formed part of a hedge-row, that was once the boundary of the churchyard." Such was the end of the poet, through whom Lincoln's Inn Fields hoped, in 1719, to recover its ancient prosperity.

Eventful incidents marked the Drury Lane season of 1719–20. It commenced in the middle of September, between which time, and the last week of the following January, things went on prosperously as between players and public, but not so as between patentees and the government. Within the period mentioned Miss Santlow had made Booth happy—an union which helped to make Susan Mountfort mad,[1] and Dennis's "Invader of His Country," and Southerne's "Spartan Dame," were produced. The former was the second of three adaptations[2] from Shakspeare's "Coriolanus." Forty years before, in 1682, Nahum Tate fancied there was something in the times like that depicted in the days of Coriolanus. To make the parallel more striking, he pulled Shakspeare's play to pieces, and out of the fragments built up his own "Ingratitude of a Commonwealth." Nahum altered all for the worse; and he wrote a new fifth act, which

[1] Very imaginative. Mrs. Mountfort lived with another lover, Mr. Minshull, for a year before Booth's marriage.

[2] There are adaptations of "Coriolanus" by Tate, Dennis, Sheridan, and Kemble.

was still worse than the mere verbal or semi-alterations. The impudence of the destroyer was illustrated by his cool assurance in the prologue, that—

> "He only ventures to make gold from ore,
> And turn to money what lay dead before."

Tate was now followed by Dennis, who altered "Coriolanus" for political reasons, brought it out at Drury Lane, in the cause of his country and sovereign, and perhaps thought to frighten the Pretender by it. The failure was complete; although Booth played the principal male character, and Mrs. Porter Volumnia.

Southerne's "Spartan Dame" had been interdicted in the reign of William and Mary, as it was supposed that the part of Celonis (Mrs. Oldfield), wavering between her duty to her father, Leonidas, and that owing to her husband, Cleombrotus (Booth), would have painfully reminded some, and joyfully reminded other, of the spectators, of the position of Mary, between her royal sire and her princely consort. But it would have been as reasonable to prohibit "Othello" or "King Lear," because of the presence in them of individuals so related. Southerne's play has no local colour about it, but abounds in anachronisms and incongruities, and it survived but during a brief popularity. The author was now sixty years of age, Dennis seven years his senior.[1] The older and unluckier, and less courteous poet, gained nothing by his play to compensate for the annuity he had purchased, but the term of which he had outlived. Southerne

[1] Dennis born 1657; Southerne 1660.

gained £500 by his "author's nights" alone; for patronage and presence on which occasions, the plausible poet personally solicited his friends. For the copyright he received an additional £120.

About six weeks after Southerne's play was produced—that is, after the performance of the "Maid's Tragedy," January 23, 1720, an order from the Duke of Newcastle, Lord Chamberlain, suddenly closed the theatre! The alleged cause was "*information* of misbehaviour on the part of the players." The real cause lay in Sir Richard Steele, the principal man who held the patent!

Since we last parted with the knight, he had been ungenerously trying, in pamphlets, to hunt to the scaffold the last Tory ministers of Queen Anne; he had lost his second wife; he had been projecting an union of Church and Kirk; he had invented a means of keeping fish alive while being transported across sea; he had been living extravagantly; but he had also offended his patron, the Duke of Newcastle, and therewith, the King, whose servant the Duke was, and the Government, of which the Duke was a member. Steele, in fact, had vehemently and successfully opposed, by speech and pamphlet, Lord Sunderland's Peerage Bill, which proposed to establish twenty-five hereditary peers of Scotland to sit in the English House of Lords, in place of the usual election of sixteen; and to create six new English peerages, with the understanding that the Crown would never, in future, make a new peer except on the extinction of an old family. Steele denounced, in the *Plebeian*,

the aristocratical tendency of the bill, and to such purpose, that the theatre he governed was closed, and his name struck out of the licence!

Steele appealed to the public, in a pamphlet, the *Theatre;* and showed, by counsel's opinion, how he had been wronged; he estimated his loss at nearly £10,000, and finally sank into distress, with mingled bitterness and wit. His old ducal patron had loudly proclaimed he would ruin him. "This," said Steele, "from a man in his circumstances, to one in mine, is as great as the humour of Malagene, in the comedy, who valued himself for his activity in 'tripping up cripples.'"

Dennis entered the lists against Sir Richard; but the worst the censor could say against the knight was, that he had a dark complexion, and wore a black peruke. Dennis also attacked actors generally, as rogues and vagabonds in the eye of the law, and liable to be whipped at the King's porter's lodge. Such was the testimony of this coarse Cockney, the son of a saddler, and a fellow who, for his ill-doings, had been expelled from Cambridge University.

Booth, Cibber, and Wilks were permitted to reopen Drury under a licence, after an interval of a few days, and the season thus recommencing on the 28th of January, with the "Careless Husband," Cibber playing Lord Foppington, ran on to August 23rd, when the house closed, with "Bartholomew Fair!" The only novelty was Hughes's "Siege of Damascus," with false quantities in its classical names, and much heaviness of treatment of an apt story. It was Hughes's

first play, and he died unconscious of its success. He was then but forty-three years of age. The old schoolfellow of Isaac Watts had begun his career by complimenting King William and eulogising Queen Anne. He had published clever translations, composed very gentlemanlike music, contributed to the *Spectator*, and obtained a place among the wits. He wrote, in 1712, the words of the opera of "Calypso and Telemachus," to prove how gracefully the English language might be wedded to music. Two Lord Chancellors were among his patrons, Cowper and Macclesfield, and that he held the Secretaryship to the Commissioners of the Peace was a pleasant consequence thereof. His "Siege of Damascus" has for moral, that it is wrong to extend religious faith by means of the sword. The angry lover who left the city he had saved, to assault it with the Arabians from whom he had saved it, and to meet the lady of his love full of abhorrence for the traitor, might have produced some emotion; but loving, loved, living, and dying, they all talk, seldom act, and never touch. Nevertheless, Booth, Wilks, Mills, and Mrs. Porter had attentive listeners, if not ecstatic auditors, during a run of ten nights. The long tirades and the ponderous similes gratified the same audiences who took delight in Norris's Barnaby Brittle, Shepherd's Sir Tunbelly Clumsey, and Mrs. Booth's Helena, in the "Rover." Nevertheless, Hughes acquired no fame. When Swift received a copy of his works, he wrote to Pope:—"I never heard of the man in my life, yet I find your name as a subscriber. He is too grave a poet for me; and, I think, among the mediocrists in

prose as well as in verse." Pope sanctioned the judgment; adding, that what Hughes wanted in genius, he made up as an honest man. Hitherto, the great tragedy of this century was "Cato."

At Lincoln's Inn, Quin played the King to Ryan's Hamlet, and created Henri Quatre in young Beckingham's second, last, and unsuccessful essay, "Henry IV. of France." What was the course of the Merchant Tailors' pupil, and son of the Fleet Street linendraper, after this, I am unable to say, further than that he died in obscurity some ten years later. A comedy, by "Handsome Leigh," a moderately fair actor, called "Kensington Gardens, or the Pretenders," showed some power of drawing character, especially an effeminate footman, Bardach, played by Bullock, but it did nothing for a theatre which was now partly relying on subscriptions in aid. At the head of the subscribers was the last Baron Brooke, whose more famous son, the first Earl of Warwick, of the Fulke Greville line, used to subscribe his political vote so singularly—first for ministers, then for the opposition, and thirdly, not at all, in undeviating regularity.

This piece failing, came Theobald's adaptation of Shakspeare's "Richard II.," very much for the worse, but so far to the profit of the adapter that the Earl of Orrery conferred on him an unusually liberal gift for the dedication, namely, a hundred pound note, enclosed in a box of Egyptian pebble, which was worth a score of pounds more. The original author was less munificently remunerated, except in abiding glory.

Another attempt served the house as poorly, namely, the re-appearance of a Mrs. Vandervelt, not because she was a clever, but that she was a very aged actress, eighty-five years old, who had not played since King Charles's time, but who had spirits enough to act the Widow Rich, in the "Half-pay Officers," a vamped-up farce, by Molloy, the political writer, and strength enough to dance a sprightly jig after it. As the hostess of a tavern in Tottenham Court Road, Peg Fryer, as the old dame was called off the stage, kept a merry and prosperous house.

Another adaptation was Griffin's comedy, "Whig and Tory," which had nothing political in it but the name; and by which that excellent low comedian, who ought to have been in the Church, and who would not be a glazier, did not add to his fame.

The "Imperial Captives" was a more ambitious venture, by a new author, Mottley. It was a tragedy, in which Quin played Genseric, King of the Vandals, and in which there is much love and a little murder, in the old thundering style, and all at cross-purposes. Distress made a poet of Mottley. His father was a Jacobite colonel, who followed James to France; his mother, a thorough-bred Whig, who stayed under William in England. Occasionally, they settled their political differences, and met. Mottley was one of those men who depend on patrons. He had lost a post in the Excise Office, and had not gained either of two which had been promised him, one in the Wine Licence Office, by Lord Halifax, and one in the Exchequer to which he had been appointed, but from

which he was immediately ousted by Sir Robert Walpole. An estate, in which he had a reversionary interest, was sold by his widowed and extravagant mother to pay her debts, and thus stripped of post and prospects, Mottley made an essay as dramatic author, a career in which he was not destined to be distinguished, although Queen Caroline patronised him during a part of it—but so she did Stephen Duck! "Cato" was not superseded; but Young was putting the finishing stroke to his "Revenge."

That tragedy, which has been acted more frequently and more recently than "Cato," was first played in the Drury Lane season of 1720–21. On the 18th of April, of the latter year, Zanga was played by Mills, while Booth took Alonzo, and Wilks, Carlos. The secondary parts were thus played by the better actors. Mrs. Porter played Leonora, Mrs. Horton, Isabella. This was a fine cast, and the piece was fairly successful. A story in the *Guardian*, and two plays, by Marlowe and Aphra Behn, are said to have furnished Young with his materials, in handling which, one of his biographers has described him as "superior even to Shakspeare!" The action does not flag, the situations are dramatic, the interest is well sustained, and the language is expressive and abounding in poetical beauty. The story of love, jealousy, and murder is, however, a little marred by the puling lines of the black Iago,—Zanga, at the close. Young obtained but £50 for the copyright of this piece.

Young's "Revenge," if built upon other plays, has served the turn of later authors. In Lord John

Russell's "Don Carlos," the reason given for the grovelling Cordoba's hatred of the Spanish prince, reminds the reader of that of Zanga for Alonzo; not less in the fact itself, the blow believed to be forgotten, but in the expression. Any one, moreover, who remembers the avowal which Artabanus makes of his guilt in the "Artaxerxes" of Metastasio, will be inclined to think that the Italian had in his mind the similar speech of the Moor to his master.

Cibber's comedy, the "Refusal," skilfully built up from the "Femmes Savantes" of Molière and the South Sea mania, ran, like the more famous tragedy, but six nights, a riot attending each representation, and finally ending in driving a good play by the author of the "Nonjuror" from the stage. The other incidents of this season are confined to the appearance of Cibber's son, Theophilus, who made his first essay in the Duke of Clarence, in the second part of "Henry IV.," as arranged by Betterton. It was a modest attempt on the part of him whose Pistol was to serve, down to our day, as a tradition to be followed. As this vagabond Theophilus appeared, there, on the other hand, departed the very pearl of chambermaids, Mrs. Saunders, who retired to become the friend and servant of Mrs. Oldfield. This last lady played but rarely this year; but Mrs. Horton profited by the opportunity, and Mrs. Porter, as a tragic actress, drew the town.

Lincoln's Inn was, at least, active in its corresponding season. The progress of Quin is curiously marked. He played Glo'ster to the Lear of Boheme; Hector, in

"Troilus and Cressida," Ryan playing Troilus; the Duke in "Measure for Measure;" Coriolanus; Aumerle, in "Richard II.;" Aaron, in "Titus Andronicus;" Leonato to Ryan's Benedick, &c. &c. Moreover, while in the "Merry Wives" he played Falstaff with great effect to the Host of Bullock, in the first part of "Henry IV." Bullock played the Knight, and Quin the King. The season, remarkable for Shakspearian revivals, creditable to Rich, was also distinguished for the failure of the original pieces produced. The "Chimæra" was a satire by Odell, a Buckinghamshire squire, pensioned by Government. It was aimed at the speculators in Change Alley, but it smote them tenderly. The "Fair Captive" was an adaptation by Mrs. Haywood, a lady who began by writing as loosely as Aphra Behn, concluded by writing as decorously as Mrs. Chapone, and left charge to her executors, in 1756, to give no aid to any biography of her that might be attempted, on the ground that the least said was the soonest mended.

This comedy[1] was only exceeded in dulness by the tragedy which succeeded it, "Antiochus," by Mottley, who could not gain fortune either as poet or placeman. In the play, Antiochus is in love with his father's wife, Stratonice, who, on being surrendered to his son, by her husband, Seleucus, is a little overjoyed, for she loves the younger prince; but she is also much shocked, and escapes from her embarrassment by suicide.

The next novelty was a tragedy in one act and with four characters, "Fatal Extravagance," attributed to

[1] Tragedy.

Miller,[1] the son of a Scottish stone-cutter. Miller was a sort of exaggerated Richard Savage; inferior to him as a poet, and in every respect a more inexcusable vagabond. He had no redeeming traits of character, and he destroyed health and fortune (both restored more than once), as insanely as he did fame and the patience of his friends. In "Fatal Extravagance," Belmour, played by Quin, kills a creditor who holds his bond, of which he also robs the dead man, mixes a "cordial," administers it to his wife and three children (off the stage), drinks and dies. The butchery[2] is soon got through, in one act. Miller subsequently declared that the piece was a gift to him from Aaron Hill. That busy and benevolent person had no money to give to a beggar; so he sat down and wrote a tragedy for him. It was a piece of clever extravagance.

It was far more amusing than Ambrose Philip's tragedy the "Briton," which was the sole novelty of the Drury Lane season 1721–22. The tragedy lacked neither skill, poetical spirit, nor incident; indeed, of love incidents there is something too much. But the amours of Yvor (Wilks) and Gwendolin (Mrs. Booth), the infidelities of Queen Cartismand (Mrs. Porter) to Vanoc (Booth), and the intervention of the Romans in these British domestic matters, interested but for a few nights, if then, an audience ill-read in their own primitive history.

[1] Should be Mitchell.

[2] But the wife and children do not die; the poisoned cup having been emptied, and refilled with a harmless potion.

Lincoln's Inn Fields was scarcely more prolific in novelty; this, with the exception of a poor drama, the "Hibernian Friend,"[1] being confined to Sturmy's tragedy, "Love and Duty;" Lynceus, one of the half hundred sons of Ægyptus, by Quin. The love is that of Lynceus and his cousin, Hypermnestra, the duty, that of killing her husband, on the bridal night, by command of her father. The "Distressed Bride," which is the second name of this piece, wisely disobeys her sire, who is ultimately slain; after which, the young people, sole survivors of fifty couple married yesterday (the bridegrooms, all brothers; and sisters, all the brides), are made happy by the hope of long life unembittered by feuds with their kinsfolk.

The last two tragedies may be looked upon as a backsliding, after "Cato," "Jane Shore," and the "Revenge;" and in tragedy there was little improvement for several years. Meanwhile, Lincoln's Inn Fields acquired Walker, from Drury Lane, and Tony Aston, an itinerant actor, the first, perhaps, who travelled the country with an entertainment in which he was the sole performer. On the other hand, the house lost pretty Miss Stone, humorous Kit Bullock (Wilks's son-in-law), and busy George Pack; the last, the original Marplot, Lissardo, and many similar characters. Pack turned vintner in Charing Cross. Quin's ability was nightly more appreciated.

There was more "study" for the Drury Lane actors in 1722–23. Mrs. Centlivre's muse died calmly out with the comedy of the "Artifice." In the good

[1] Should be "Hibernia Freed."

scenes there was an approach to sentimental comedy, more fully reached, in November, by Steele, in his "Conscious Lovers," in which Booth played Young Bevil, and Mrs. Oldfield, Indiana. There was not an inferior performer in any of the other parts of this comedy, which Fielding sneers at, by making Parson Adams declare that there were things in it that would do very well in a sermon. Modern critics have called this comedy dull, but decent; perhaps because Steele affected to claim it as at least moral in its tendency. The truth, however, is, that it is excessively indecent. There is nothing worse in Aphra Behn than the remarks made by Cimberton, the "coxcomb with reflection," on Lucinda. This fop, played by Griffin, is for winning a beauty by the rules of metaphysics. There is more pathos than humour in this comedy; the author of which had now recovered his share in the patent, by favour of Sir Robert Walpole; and it is by directing attention only to such scenes as those between Bevil and Indiana, or between the former and his friend Myrtle (Wilks), that critics have not correctly declared that the sentiments are those of the most refined morality! For the very attempt to render them so, even partially, Sir Richard has been sneered at, very recently, by a writer who looks upon Steele as a fool for preferring to make Bevil the portrait of what a man ought to be rather than what man really was. The story of the piece is admirably manipulated and reformed from the "Andria," of Terence, though Tom (Cibber) is but a sorry Davus.

On one night of the performance of this play, a

general officer was observed in the boxes, weeping at the distresses of Indiana. The circumstance was noted to Wilks, who, with kindly feeling ever ready, remarked, "I am certain the officer will fight none the worse for it!" Steele must have had more than ordinary power, if he could draw tears from martial eyes in those days.

It is not to be supposed that Pope set the author, as a writer, below Crowne; and yet, in the following lines, where the two are mentioned, there is no very complimentary allusion to Sir Richard:—

> "When simple Macer, now of high renown,
> First sought a poet's fortune in the town,
> 'Twas all th' ambition his high soul could feel,
> To wear red stockings and to dine with Steele.
> Some ends of verse his betters might afford,
> And gave the harmless fellow a good word.
> Set up with these, he ventured on the town,
> And with a borrow'd play outdid poor Crowne.
> There he stopt short, nor since has writ a tittle,
> But has the wit to make the most of little."

Crowne, at least, found something of an imitator in Ambrose Philips, whose tragedy, "Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester" (Duke, Booth; Beaufort, Cibber; Margaret, Mrs. Oldfield; Duchess of Gloucester, Mrs. Porter), was produced in this season. It was the last and worst of Philips' three dramatic essays. The insipid additions in the scene of Beaufort's death are justly described by Genest as being in Crowne's vapid and senseless fashion; and the public would not accept this cold, declamatory, conversational play as a substitute for the varied incidents which go to the making up of the second part of Shakspeare's "Henry VI."

Even in Dr. Johnson's time, "it was only remembered by its title;" we may, therefore, here take leave of the old secretary of the Hanover Club, who found more fortune in place and pension in Ireland, than he could derive from poetry and play writing in England. To the latter country he returned in 1748, to "enjoy himself," in pursuit of which end he died the following year. Addison once thought him well enough provided for, by being made a Westminster justice. "Nay," said Ambrose, like a virtuous man in comedy, "though poetry be a trade I cannot live by, yet I scorn to owe subsistence to another which I ought not to live by;" and he nobly gave up the justiceship—as soon as he was otherwise provided for!

Philips was followed by an inferior author, but a greater man, Sir Hildebrand Jacob, with a classical tragedy, "Fatal Constancy," in which all the unities are preserved; but *that* did not bring it the nearer to "Cato."

Then followed, in the summer and less fashionable portion of the season, Savage's tragedy, "Sir Thomas Overbury," in which the author played, very indifferently, the hero. At this time, the hapless young man was not widely known, except to those friends on whose charity he lived while he abused it. Favoured by Wilks and patronised by Theophilus Cibber, the ragged, rakish fellow, slunk at nights into the theatre, and by day lounged where he could, composing his tragedy on scraps of paper. In producing it, ever ready Aaron Hill assisted him; and his profits, amounting to about £200, gave him a tem-

porary appearance of respectability. Savage is said to have been deeply ashamed of having turned actor; but it seems to me that he was only ashamed of having failed. He had neither voice, figure, nor any other qualification for such a profession. The tragedy lived but three days. There is something adroit in the conduct of the plot, and evidence of correctness of conjecture as to the truth of the relations between Overbury and Lady Somerset,—but there was no vitality therewith; and the poet gained no lasting fame by the effort.

Mrs. Haywood followed Savage's example, in acting in her own comedy, "A Wife to be Let;"[1] but as this and other original pieces or adaptations passed away unheeded or disgraced, I may here conclude my notice of this season, by recording the death of Mrs. Bicknell, a woman, or rather an actress of merit, and the original representative of Cherry in the "Beaux' Stratagem."

Against Drury, the house in the Fields long struggled in vain. Audiences, of five or six pounds in value, discouraged the actors. Egleton was not equal to Cibber; yet the "Baron," as he was called, from having assumed the title, when squandering his little patrimony in France, was next to Colley in fops. Quin, Ryan, and Boheme could not attract like Booth, Wilks, and Cibber; and Hippisley and others, acting "Julius Cæsar," as a comic piece, was not a happy idea.[2] Not more so, was that of turning the

[1] "By reason of the indisposition of an actress."

[2] This is a most strange mistake. It is evidently caused by the entry in Genest on 10th January 1723, which is:—"Julius Cæsar. Comic characters—Hippisley, &c." This of course means that the characters

story of "Cartouche," who had recently been broken on the wheel, into a farce. The company lost their best actress, too, in Mrs. Seymour, whom Boheme married and took off the stage, to Ryan's great regret, as she acted admirably up to him. A promising actor, too, was lost to the troop, in young Reakstraw. In the summer vacation he was playing Darius, in a booth in Moorfields,—no derogation in those days. In the scene in which he is attacked by Bessus and Nabarzanes, one of the latter two thrust his foil at the King so awkwardly, that it entered the eye, pierced his brain, and laid the actor, after a scream, dead upon the boards!

With this season, it is to be noted that the fortune of Lincoln's Inn mended—thanks to the impertinence of Colley Cibber. To the latter, a tragedy had been presented by a modest gentleman, of a good old Staffordshire family, named Fenton. He was forty years of age at this time. Cibber knew his antecedents, that his Jacobite principles had been an obstacle to his ordination, for which he was well qualified, and that although he had been secretary and tutor in the family of Lord Orrery, Fenton had also earned his bread in the humble, but honourable, capacity of usher in a boarding-school. Colley read the tragedy, "Mariamne," and after keeping it unnecessarily long, he returned it, with the advice that Fenton should stick to some honest calling, and cease to woo the Muses. Elijah Fenton, however, had friends who

in the tragedy which were, according to theatrical usage, played by comedians (the *Plebeians*, for instance), were played by Hippisley, &c., not that all the characters were made comic.

enabled him now to live independently of labour, and by their counsel he took "Mariamne" to Rich, who immediately brought it out, with Quin as Sohemus, Boheme as Herod, and Mrs. Seymour as Mariamne —her one great creation.

Boheme, in Herod, played well up to the Mariamne of Mrs. Seymour; but he could not approach Mondory in that character, in the French play by Tristan. Mondory used to have his audience, on this occasion, departing from him, depressed, silent, wrapt in meditation. He surrendered himself entirely to the part, and died of the consequences of his efforts. Herod was as truly the name of the malady to which he succumbed, as *Orestes* was of that which killed Montfleury, as he was playing Oreste, in Racine's tragedy of "Andromaque."

The old story of Herod and Mariamne is so simple and natural that it appeals to every heart, in every age. Fenton perilled it by additions; but the tragedy won a triumph, and the poet to whom Pope paid about £250 for translating four books of the *Odyssey* for him, netted four times that sum by this drama. He became famous, and critics did not note the false quantity which the Cambridge man gave to the penultimate of Salome. Fenton was rendered supremely happy, but his dramatic fame rests on this piece alone. He never wooed Melpomene again, but lived calmly the brief seven years of life which followed his success. Like Prior dying at Wimpole, the honoured guest of Harley, Fenton died at Easthampstead, the equally esteemed guest of Sir William Trumbull, son of King

William's secretary of state. In Pope's well-known epitaph, Fenton's character is beautifully described in a few simple lines.

Aaron Hill was the exact opposite of quiet Fenton. His beech-nut oil company having failed, he joined Sir Robert Montgomery in a project for colonising South Carolina; and this too proving unproductive, he turned to the stage, and brought out in the season of 1723–24, at Drury Lane, his tragedy of "Henry V." —an "improvement" of Shakspeare's historical play of the same name. Hill's additions comprise a Harriet (Mrs. Thurmond), for whom he invented a breeches part, and some melodramatic situations—especially between her and Henry (Booth). Hill cut out all Shakspeare's comic characters; but he was so anxious for the success of the piece, that he spent £200 of his own on the scenery, of which he made a present to the managers; and, after all, his play failed, despite the brilliant Katherine of Mrs. Oldfield, and the Dauphin of Wilks.

More successful was the "Captives," by Gay. The ex-mercer was now a poet, whom the "quality" petted; but he was not yet at the summit of his fame. The "Captives" did not help to raise him. The story was found unnatural, and the style stilted. A Persian captive (Booth) is a Joseph, against whom the Median Queen, whom he has offended, vows vengeance; in pursuit of which, love and murder are extensively employed. Mrs. Oldfield had one good scene in it as Cydene, captive wife of the Persian Joseph, for whom she entertains a warm

regard, of which he is worthy; yet these actors, well seconded, could only drag the tragedy through seven representations, before it was consigned to oblivion. But the company was strong enough to make their old repertory, with Shakspeare in the van, attractive; and they had nothing to regret, when the season closed, but the death of Pinkethman, who for two and thirty years, and chiefly at Drury Lane, had been the most irresistible laughter-compeller of that stage, on which he had originated Beau Clincher, Old Mirabel, and a score of similar merry characters.

The company had not to complain; yet the managers had found it necessary to support their stock-pieces by a novelty—a ballet-pantomime, "The Necromancer,"[1] by the younger Thurmond, a dancing-master. Rich, at Lincoln's Inn, where "Edwin" could not have drawn a shilling; where Belisarius (Boheme) begged an obolus in vain; and Hurst's "Roman Maid" (Paulina, Mrs. Moffat), represented a hermit as dwelling in a lone cave, near the Mount Aventine—a hermit would be as likely to be found in a wood on Snow Hill—Rich, I say, improved on Thurmond's idea, by producing on the 20th of December 1723, "The Necromancer, or the History of Dr. Faustus," and thereby founded pantomime, as it has been established among us, at least during the Christmas-tide, for now a hundred and forty years.

Rich, with his "Necromancer," conjured all the town within the ring of his little theatre. The splen-

[1] Thurmond's piece appears to have been called "Harlequin Doctor Faustus."

dour of the scenes, the vastness of the machinery, and the grace and ability of Rich himself, raised harlequinade above Shakspeare, and all other poets; and Quin and Ryan were accounted little of in comparison with the motley hero. The pantomime stood prominently in the bills; during the nights of its attraction the prices of admission were raised by one-fourth, and the weekly receipts advanced from six hundred (if the house was full every night, which had been a rare case in the Fields), to a thousand pounds. The advanced price displeased the public, with whom ultimately a compromise was made, and a portion returned to those who chose to leave the house before the pantomime commenced.

While the drama was thus yielding to the attractions of pantomime, a new theatre invited the public. The little theatre in the Haymarket opened its doors for the first time on the 12th of September[1] 1723, with the "French Fop," of which the author, Sandford, says, that he wrote it in a few weeks, when he was but fifteen years of age. That may account for its having straightway died; but it served to introduce to the stage the utility actor, Milward. The theatre was only open for a few nights.

Of the season 1724–5, at Drury Lane, there is little to be said, save that the inimitable company worked well and profitably in sterling old plays. Wilks returned to Sir Harry Wildair, and the public laughed at Cibber's quivering tragedy tones, when playing Achoreus, in his adaptation from Beaumont

[1] Genest says 12th of December 1723.

and Fletcher's "False One." In "Cæsar in Egypt," Antony and Cleopatra were played by Wilks and Mrs. Oldfield, who were never more happy than when making love on the stage. This was the sole novelty of the season.

In the Fields there was more of it, but that most relied on was Rich's "Harlequin Sorcerer," produced on the 21st of January 1725. The "Bath Unmasked" was the only original comedy produced. It described Bath as made up of very unprincipled people, with a good lord to about a score of knaves and hussies. It was the first and not lucky essay of miserable Gabriel Odingsell, who, nine years later, in a fit of madness, hung himself in his house, Thatched Court, Westminster.

Booth was more brilliant than he had ever yet been, in the Drury Lane season of 1725–26. In Shakspeare he shone conspicuously, and his Hotspur to the Prince of Wales of Giffard, from Dublin, charmed as much by its chivalry as Cato did by its dignity. Mrs. Oldfield enjoyed, and Mrs. Cibber, first wife of Theophilus, claimed the favour of the town; and the elder Cibber surrendered one or two old characters to a younger actor, Bridgewater. Amid a succession of old dramas, one novelty only was offered, a translation of the "Hecuba" of Euripides, with slight variations. The author was Richard West, son-in-law of Bishop Burnet, and father of young West, the early friend of Walpole and Gray. His play was acted on the 3d[1] of February 1726, at which time West was Lord Chan-

[1] Should be 2d.

cellor of Ireland. On the first night a full audience would not listen to the piece, and on the next two nights there was scarcely an audience assembled to listen. Neither Booth as Polymnestor, nor Mrs. Porter as Hecuba, could win the general ear. It did not succeed, wrote the author, "because *it was not heard.* A rout of Vandals in the galleries intimidated the young actresses, disturbed the audience, and prevented all attention; and, I believe, if the verses had been repeated in the original Greek, they would have been understood and received in the same manner." The young actresses were Mrs. Brett and Mrs. Cibber; the latter was not the famous lady of that name, destined to the highest walks of tragedy. Lord Chancellor West died in December of this year.

The above single play was, however, worth all the novelties produced by Rich at Lincoln's Inn Fields. These were comedies of a farcical kind. In one of them, the "Capricious Lovers," by Odingsell, there was an original character, Mrs. Mincemode (Mrs. Bullock), who "grows sick at the sight of a man, and refines upon the significancy of phrases, till she resolves common observations into indecency." In the "French Fortune-teller,"[1] the public failed to be regaled with a piece stolen from Ravenscroft, who had stolen his from the French. The third play was "Money the Mistress," which the audience damned, in spite of the reputation of Southerne, who, with this failure, closed a dramatic career which had commenced half a century earlier. In its course he had

[1] Should be "Female Fortune-teller."

written ten plays, the author of which had this in common with Shakspeare—that he was born at Stratford-on-Avon.

With this year, 1726–27, came the first symptom of a "break-up" in the hitherto prosperous condition of Drury Lane. It occurred in the first long and serious illness of Booth, which kept him from the theatre, three long and weary months to the town. The season at Drury Lane, however, and that at Lincoln's Inn Fields, had this alike, that after Booth's welcome return, all London was excited by expectations raised by comedies whose authors were "gentlemen," in whose success the "quality," generally, were especially interested. At Drury it was the "Rival Modes," by Moore Smythe; at Lincoln's Inn Fields, the "Dissembled Wanton, or, my Son, get Money," by Leonard Welsted. In the former piece there is a gay lover, Bellamine (Wilks), wooing the grave Melissa (Mrs. Porter), while the serious Sagely (Mills) pays suit to the sprightly widow Amoret (Mrs. Oldfield). An old beau of King William's time, Earl of Late Airs (Cibber), brings his son to town (Lord Toupet, a modern beau, by Theophilus Cibber), in order that he may marry Melissa, with her father's consent. Amoret contrives to upset this arrangement, and the other lovers are duly united. The plot was good, the players unsurpassable, the two Cibbers fooling it to the top of their bent, and old and new fashions were pleasantly contrasted; but the action was languid, and the piece was hissed.

The incident lacking here, abounded in Welsted's

intriguing comedy, the "Dissembled Wanton," a character finely acted by Mrs. Younger[1]—whose marriage with Beaufort (Walker) being forbidden by her father, Lord Severne (Quin), by whom she had been sent to France, she reappears in her father's presence as Sir Harry Truelove, whose real character is known only to Emilia (Mrs. Bullock), Lord Severne's ward. Emilia's intimacy with Sir Harry causes the rupture of her marriage with Colonel Severne, and some coarse scenes have to be got through before all is explained; the respective lovers are united, and Humphrey Staple (Hall) finds it useless to urge his son Toby (W. Bullock) to get money by espousing the rich ward Emilia.

Although Welsted's comedy was lively, it was found to be ill-written. He had had time enough to polish it, for ten years previous to its production Steele had commended the plot, the moral, and the style; he had even praised its decency. Like Moore Smyth's, it could not win the town. The respective authors, who made so much ineffectual noise in their own day, would be unknown to us in this, but for the censure of Pope. In the *Dunciad* they enjoy notoriety with Theobald, or Cibber, Gildon, Dennis, Centlivre, and Aaron Hill. Moore was an Oxford man, who assumed his maternal grandfather's name—being his heir—and held one or two lucrative posts under Government. His father, the famous Arthur Moore, a wit, a politician, and a statesman, who was long M.P. for Grimsby, had risen, by force of his talents, to an eminent posi-

[1] Emilia is the Dissembled Wanton.

tion from a humble station. Pope stooped to call Moore Smyth the son of a footman, and, when the latter name was assumed on his taking his maternal grandfather's estate, the Whigs lampooned him as born at "the paternal seat of his family—the tap-house of the prison-gate, at Monaghan."

Moore was on intimate terms with the Mapledurham ladies—the Blounts, and with others of Pope's friends, as well as with Pope himself. Some tags of the poet's lines he had introduced into his unlucky comedy, and on this Pope supported a grossly-expressed and weakly-founded charge of plagiarism. Welsted, who was of a good Leicestershire family, and of fair abilities, had moved Pope's wrath by writing satirical verses against him, and the feeling was embittered when the two dramatists united in addressing *One Epistle* to Pope, in which they touched him more painfully than he cared to confess. Neither Moore nor Welsted ever tempted fortune on the stage again. "Cœstus artemque repono," said the former, on the title-page of his comedy, as if he was revenging himself on society. Welsted confined himself, after some skirmishing with his critics, to his duties in the Ordnance Office. His wives were women of some mark. The first was the daughter of Purcell; the second the sister of Walker, the great defender of Londonderry.

A better gentleman than either, Philip Frowde—scholar, wit, poet, true man, friend of Addison, and a friend to all,—was praised by the critics for his "Fall of Saguntum;" but the public voice did not ratify

the judgment, though Ryan, as Fabius, and Quin, as Eurydamas, with Mrs. Berriman, as Candace,—an Amazonian queen, with nothing very womanly about her,—exerted themselves to the utmost. One other failure has to be recorded—"Philip of Macedon," by David Lewis, the friend of Pope. With a dull tragedy, Pope's friend had no more chance of misleading the public, than his foes, with weak comedies. The greater poet's commendation so little influenced that public, that on the first night, with Pope himself in the house, the audience was so numerically small,—though Walker, Ryan, Quin, Mrs. Berriman, Mrs. Younger, and others, were, in their "habits" as unlike Macedonians as they could well be,—the managers deemed acting to such a house not profitable, and dismissed it accordingly. The author's final condemnation was only postponed for a night or two, when he sank, never to rise again.[1]

With Booth's failing health, and the ill-success of novelties produced at either house, there was a gloom over theatrical matters. But at this very time a sun was rising from behind the cloud. In one of the irregular series of performances, held at the little theatre in the Haymarket, in 1726, there appeared a young lady, in the part of Monimia, in the "Orphan," and subsequently as Cherry, in the "Beaux' Stratagem." She was pretty, clever, and eighteen; but she was not destined to become either the tragic or the comic queen. Soon after, however, thanks to the judgment of Rich, who gave her the

[1] Acted four times.

opportunity, she was hailed as the queen of English song. She was known as Lavinia Fenton, but she was the daughter of a naval lieutenant, named Beswick. Her widowed mother had married a coffee-house keeper in Charing Cross, whose name of Fenton was assumed by his step-daughter. Before we shall hear of her at Lincoln's Inn Fields, a lieutenant[1] will be offering her everything he possessed except his name; but Lavinia, without being as discreet, was even more successful than Pamela, and died a duchess.

Throughout the reign of George I., Barton Booth kept his position as the first English tragedian,—undisturbed even by the power of Quin. Associated with him, were comedians,—Wilks, Cibber, Mrs. Oldfield, Porter, Horton, and others, who shed splendour on the stage, at this period. The new dramatic poets of that reign were few, and not more than one of those few can be called distinguished. The name of Young alone survives in the memory, and that but for one tragedy, the "Revenge." Of comedies, there is not one of the reign of George I. that is even read for its merits. It is otherwise with the comedies of an actress and dramatist who died in this reign,—Susanna Centlivre; and yet a contemporary notice of her death simply states that, as an actress, "having a greater inclination to wear the breeches than the petticoat, she struck into the men's parts;" and that the dramatist "had a small wen on her left eyelid, which gave her a masculine air."

[1] Cooke (*Memoirs of Mucklin*) says "a young libertine of very high rank."

Eventful to both houses was the season of 1727–28. It was the last season of Booth, at Drury Lane; and it was the first of the "Beggars' Opera," at Lincoln's Inn Fields. After thirty years' service, in the reigns of William, Anne, George I., and now in that of George II., in which Garrick was to excel him, that admirable actor was compelled, by shattered health, to withdraw. For many nights he played Henry VIII., and walked in the coronation scene, which was tacked to various other plays, in honour of the accession of George II., who, with the royal family, went, on the 7th of November, to witness Booth enact the King. On the 9th of January, Booth, after a severe struggle, played, for the sixth and last time, Julio, in the "Double Falsehood;" a play which Theobald ascribed to Shakspeare; Dr. Farmer, to Shirley; others, to Massinger; but which was chiefly Theobald's own, founded on a manuscript copy which, through Downes, the prompter, had descended to him from Betterton, and which served Colman, who certainly derived his Octavian from Julio.

The loss in Booth was, in some degree, supplied by the "profit" arising from a month's run of a new comedy by Vanbrugh and Cibber—the "Provoked Husband;" in which the Lord and Lady Townley were played by these incomparable lovers—Wilks and Mrs. Oldfield. Cibber acted Sir Francis Wronghead, and young Wetherell, Squire Richard. Vanbrugh was at this time dead—in 1726, at his house in Whitehall, of quinsey. The critics and enemies of Cibber were sadly at fault on this occasion. Hating him

for his "Nonjuror," they hissed all the scenes of which they supposed him to be the author; and applauded those which they were sure were by Vanbrugh. Cibber published the imperfect play left by Sir John, and thereby showed that his adversaries condemned and approved exactly in the wrong places.

Cibber enjoyed another triumph this season. Steele, abandoning the responsibilities of management, to follow his pleasure, had submitted to a deduction of £1, 13s. 4d. nightly, to each of his partners, for performing his duties. Steele was at this time in Wales, dying, though he survived till September 1729. His creditors, meanwhile, claimed the "five marks" as their own, and the case went into the Rolls Court, before Sir Joseph Jekyll. Cibber pleaded in person the cause of himself and active partners, and so convincingly, that he obtained a decree in their favour.

In presence of this new audience, the old actor confesses he felt fear. He carried with him the heads of what he was about to urge; but, says Colley, "when it came to the critical moment, the dread and apprehension of what I had undertaken so disconcerted my courage, that though I had been used to talk to above fifty thousand people every winter, for upwards of thirty years together, an involuntary and unexpected proof of confusion fell from my eyes; and as I found myself quite out of my element, I seemed rather gasping for life, than in a condition to cope with the eminent orators against me." Cibber, however, recovered himself, and vanquished his adversaries,

though two of them were of the stuff that won for them, subsequently, the dignity of Lord Chancellor.

The "Beggar's Opera" season at Lincoln's Inn Fields was the most profitable ever known there. Swift's idea of a Newgate pastoral was adopted by Gay, who, smarting under disappointment of preferment at Court, and angry at the offer to make him gentleman-usher to the youngest of the royal children, indulged his satirical humour against ministers and placemen, by writing a Newgate comedy, at which Swift and Pope shook their heads, and old Congreve, for one of whose three sinecures Gay would have given his ears, was sorely perplexed as to whether it would bring triumph or calamity to its author. The songs were added, but Cibber, as doubtful as Congreve, declined what Rich eagerly accepted, and the success of which was first discerned by the Duke of Argyle, from his box on the stage, who looked at the house, and "saw it in the eyes of them."

Walker, who had been playing tragic parts, and very recently Macbeth, was chosen for Macheath, on Quin declining the highwayman. Lavinia Fenton was the Polly; Peachum, by Hippisley; and Spiller made a distinctive character of Mat o' the Mint. Walker "knew no more of music than barely singing in tune; but then his singing was supported by his inimitable action, by his speaking to the eye and charming the ear." It was at the close of a long run of the piece that Walker once tripped in his words. "I wonder," said Rich, "that you should forget the words of a part you have played so often!" "Do

you think," asked Walker, with happy equivocation, "that a man's memory is to last for ever?"

Sixty-two nights in this season the "Beggar's Opera" drew crowded houses.[1] Highwaymen grew fashionable, and ladies not only carried fans adorned with subjects from the opera, but sang the lighter, and hummed the coarser, songs. Sir Robert Walpole, who was present on the first night, finding the eyes of the audience turned on him as Lockit was singing his song touching courtiers and bribes, was the first to blunt the point of the satire, by calling *encore*. Swift says, "*two* great ministers were in a box together, and all the world staring at them." At this time it was said that the quarrel of Peachum and Lockit was an imitation of that of Brutus and Cassius, but the public discerned therein Walpole and his great adversary Townshend.

"The Beggar's Opera" hath knocked down *Gulliver*, wrote Swift to Gay. "I hope to see Pope's 'Dulness' (the first name of the *Dunciad*) knock down the 'Beggar's Opera,' but not till it hath fully done its job." But Gay had no "mission;" he only sought to gratify himself and the town; to satirise, not to teach or to warn; the "opera" made "Gay rich, and Rich gay;" the former sufficiently so to make him forego earning a fee of twenty guineas by a dedication, and the latter only so far sad, that at the end of the season, Lavinia Fenton, after two benefits, was taken off the stage by the Duke of Bolton. The

[1] The Notes to the *Dunciad* say "sixty-three days, uninterrupted;" but this is probably an error.

latter had from his wedding-day hated his wife, daughter and sole heiress of the Earl of Carberry; but his love for Lavinia was so abounding, that on his wife's death, he made a Duchess of "Polly;" but their three sons were not born at a time that rendered either of them heir to the ducal coronet, which, in 1754, passed to the Duke's brother. Gay's author's night realised a gain to him of £700, and enabled him to dress in "silver and blue." While he is blazing abroad, the once great master, Booth, is slowly dying out. Let us tell his varied story as his life ebbs surely away.

Mr. Foote as the Doctor.

BARTON BOOTH.

CHAPTER XVIII.

BARTON BOOTH.

At this period it was evident that the stage was about to lose its greatest tragedian since the death of Betterton. Booth was stricken past recovery, and all the mirth caused by the "Beggar's Opera" could not make his own peculiar public forget him. Scarcely eight and thirty years had elapsed since the time when, in 1690, a handsome, well-bred lad, whose age did not then amount to two lustres, sought admission into Westminster School. Dr. Busby thought him too young; but young Barton Booth was the son of a gentleman, was of the family of Booth, Earl of War-

rington, and was a remarkably clever and attractive boy. The Doctor, whose acting had been commended by Charles I., perhaps thought of the school-plays, and recognised in little Barton the promise of a lover in Terence's comedies. At all events, he admitted the applicant.

Barton Booth, a younger son of a Lancashire sire, was destined for Holy Orders. He was a fine elocutionist, and he took to Latin as readily as Erasmus; but then he had Nicholas Rowe for a school-fellow; and, one day, was cast for Pamphilus in the "Andria." Luckily, or unluckily, he played this prototype of young Bevil in Steele's "Conscious Lovers" with such ease, perfection, and charming intelligence, that the old dormitory shook with plaudits. The shouts of approbation changed the whole purpose of his sire; they deprived the church of a graceful clergyman, and gave to the stage one of the most celebrated of our actors.

He was but seventeen, when his brilliant folly led him to run away from home, and tempt fortune, by playing Oroonoko, in Dublin. The Irish audiences confirmed the judgment of the Westminster critics, and the intelligent lad moved the hands of the men and the hearts of the women, without a check, during a glorious three years of probation. And yet he narrowly escaped failure, through a ridiculous accident, when, in 1698, he made his *debut* as Oroonoko. It was a sultry night in June. While waiting to go on, before his last scene, he inadvertently wiped his darkened face, and the lamp-black thereon came off

in streaks. On entering on the stage, unconscious of the countenance he presented, he was saluted with a roar of laughter, and became much confused. The generous laughers then sustained him by loud applause. But Booth was disturbed by this accident, and to obviate its repetition, he went on, the next night, in a crape mask, made by an actress to fit close to his face. Unfortunately, in the first scene the mask slipped, and the new audience were as hilarious as the old. "I looked like a magpie," said Barton; "but they lamp-blacked me for the rest of the night, and I was flayed before I could get it off again." The mishap of the first night did not affect his triumph; this was so complete that Ashbury, the "master," made him a present of five guineas; bright forerunners of the fifty that were to be placed in his hands by delighted Bolingbroke.

The hitherto penniless player was now fairly on the first step of the ascent it was his to accomplish. When he subsequently passed through Lancashire to London, in 1701, his fame had gone before him; he reached the capital with his manly beauty to gain him additional favour, with a heavy purse, and a steady conviction of even better fortune to come. With such a personage, his hitherto angry kinsmen were, of course, reconciled forthwith.

One morning early in that year, 1701, he might have been seen leaving Lord Fitzharding's rooms at St. James's, with Bowman, the player, and making his way to Betterton's house in Great Russell Street. From the lord in waiting to Prince George of Den-

mark, he carries a letter of recommendation to the father of the stage; and generous old Thomas, jealous of no rival, depreciator of no talent, gave the stranger a hearty welcome; heard his story, asked for a taste of his quality, imparted good counsel, took him into training, and ultimately brought him out at Lincoln's Inn Fields, 1701, as Maximus, in Rochester's "Valentinian." Betterton played Ætius, and Mrs. Barry, Lucina. These two alone were enough to daunt so young an actor; but Booth was not vain enough to be too modest, and the public at once hailed in him a new charmer. His ease, grace, fire, and the peculiar harmony of his voice, altogether distinct from that of Betterton's, created a great impression. "Booth with the silver tongue" gained the epithet before Barry was born. Westminster subsequently celebrated him in one of her school prologues:—

> "Old Roscius to our Booth must bow,
> 'Twas then but art, 'tis nature now,"

and the district was proud of both players; of the young one of gentle blood, educated in St. Peter's College, and of the old one, the royal cook's son, who was christened in St. Margaret's, August 12,[1] 1635.

At first, Booth was thought of as a promising undergraduate of the buskin, and he had faults to amend. He confessed to Cibber that "he had been for some time too frank a lover of the bottle;" but, having the tipsyness of Powell ever before him as a

[1] Malone says "August 11."

terrible warning, he made a resolution of maintaining a sobriety of character, from which he never departed. Cibber pronounces this to be "an uncommon act of philosophy in a young man;" but he adds, that "in his fame and fortune he afterwards enjoyed the reward and benefit."

For a few years, then, Booth had arduous work to go through, and every sort of "business" to play. The House in the Fields, too, suffered from the tumblers, dancers, and sagacious animals, added to the ordinary and well-acted plays at the House in the Lane. Leisure he had also amid all his labour, to pay successful suit to a young lady, the daughter of a Norfolk baronet, Sir William Barkham, whom he married in 1704. The lady died childless six years later. Till this last period—that, too, of the death of Betterton—Booth may be said to have been in his minority as an actor, or, as Cibber puts it, "only in the promise of that reputation," which he soon after happily arrived at. Not that when that was gained he deemed himself perfect. The longest life, he used to say, was not long enough to enable an actor to be *perfect* in his art.

Previous to 1710 he had created many new characters; among others, Dick, in the "Confederacy;" and he had played the Ghost in "Hamlet," with such extraordinary power, such a supernatural effect, so solemn, so majestic, and so affecting, that it was only second in attraction to the Dane of Betterton. But Pyrrhus and Cato were yet to come. Meanwhile, soon after his wife's death, he played Captain

Worthy, in the "Fair Quaker of Deal," to the Dorcas Zeal of Miss Santlow, destined to be his second wife—but not just yet.

The two great characters created by him, between the year when he played with Miss Santlow in Charles Shadwell's comedy, and that in which he married her, were Pyrrhus, in the "Distressed Mother" (1712), and "Cato" (1713). Within the limits stated, Booth kept household with poor Susan Mountfort, the daughter of the abler actress of that name. At such arrangements society took small objection, and beyond the fact, there was nothing to carp at in Barton's home. The latter was broken up, however—the lady being in fault—in 1718, when Booth, who had been the faithful steward of Susan's savings, consigned to her £3200, which were speedily squandered by her next "friend," Mr. Minshull. The hapless young creature became insane; in which condition it is credibly asserted that she one night went through the part of Ophelia, with a melancholy wildness which rendered many of her hearers almost as distraught as herself; soon after which she died. Meanwhile, her more faithful friend, the acknowledged successor of Betterton, achieved his two greatest triumphs—in characters originally represented by him—Pyrrhus and Cato. Those who have experienced the affliction of seeing or reading the "Distressed Mother," may remember that the heaviest part in that heavy play is that of Pyrrhus. But in acting it, Booth set the Orestes of less careful Powell in the shade. "His entrance," says Victor, "his

walking and mounting to the throne, his sitting down, his manner of giving audience to the ambassador,[1] his rising from the throne, his descending and leaving the stage—though circumstances of a very common character in theatrical performances, yet were executed by him with a grandeur not to be described."

But it is with "Cato" that Booth is identified. Fortunate it was for him that the play Addison had kept so long in his desk was not printed, according to Pope's advice, for readers only. Fortunate, too, was the actor in the political coincidences of the time. Marlborough, now a Whig, had asked to be appointed "commander-in-chief for life." Harley, Bolingbroke, and the other Tories, described this as an attempt to establish a perpetual dictatorship. The action and the sentiment of "Cato" are antagonistic to such an attempt, and the play had a present political, as well as a great dramatic interest. Common consent gave the part of the philosopher of Utica to Booth; Addison named young Ryan, son of a Westminster tailor, as Marcus, and the young fellow justified the nomination. Wilks, Cibber, and Mrs. Oldfield filled the other principal parts. Addison surrendered all claim to profit, and on the evening of April 14, 1713, there was excitement and expectation on both sides of the curtain.

Booth really surpassed himself; his dignity, pathos, energy, were all worthy of Betterton, and yet were in nowise after the old actor's manner. The latter was

[1] "Giving his answer to the ambassador."—*Victor.*

forgotten on this night, and Booth occupied exclusively the public eye, ear, and heart. The public judgment answered to the public feeling. The Tories applauded every line in favour of popular liberty, and the Whigs sent forth responsive peals to show that they, too, were advocates of popular freedom.[1] The pit was in a whirlwind of delicious agitation, and the Tory occupants of the boxes were so affected by the acting of Booth, that Bolingbroke, when the play was over, sent for the now greatest actor of the day, and presented him with a purse containing fifty guineas, the contributions of gentlemen who had experienced the greatest delight at the energy with which he had resisted a perpetual dictatorship, and maintained the cause of public liberty! The managers paid the actor a similar pecuniary compliment, and for five-and-thirty[2] consecutive nights "Cato" filled Drury Lane, and swelled the triumph of Barton Booth. There was no longer anything sad in the old exclamation of Steele—"Ye gods! what a part would Betterton make of Cato!" The managers, Wilk, Cibber, and Dogget, were as satisfied as the public, for the share of profit to each at the end of this eventful season amounted to £1350!

[1] Dr. Doran exactly reverses the state of the case. Dr. Johnson says: "The Whigs applauded every line in which liberty was mentioned, as a satire on the Tories; and the Tories echoed every clap, to show that the satire was unfelt."

[2] Wrong. Victor in his Memoirs of Booth says five-and-twenty nights: but this also is incorrect. On May 9, 1713, "Cato" is announced to be played for the twentieth time, and on May 10, for Mrs. Rogers' benefit, "The Funeral" is in the bill. Cibber says "Cato" was acted every day for a month, Mondays excepted.

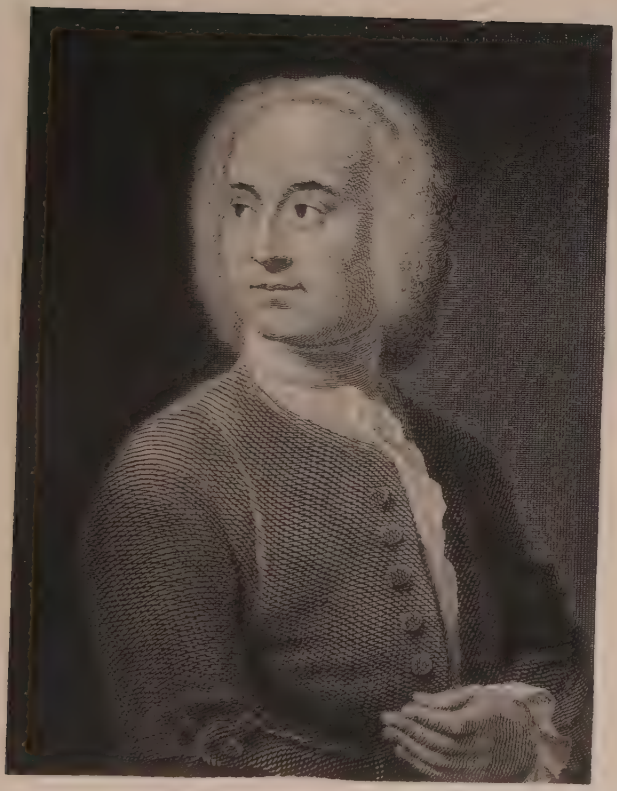
When Booth and his fellow-actors, after the close of the London season, went to Oxford to play "Cato," before a learned and critical audience, "our house was in a manner invested, and entrance demanded by twelve o'clock at noon, and, before one, it was not wide enough for many who came too late for places. The same crowds continued for three days together (an uncommon curiosity in that place), and the death of Cato triumphed over the injuries of Cæsar everywhere. At our taking leave, we had the thanks of the Vice-Chancellor, 'for the decency and order observed by our whole society;' an honour," adds Cibber, proudly, "which had not always been paid on the same occasion." Four hundred and fifty pounds clear profit were shared by the managers, who gave the actors double pay, and sent a contribution of fifty pounds towards the repairs of St. Mary's Church.

The church, of which Booth was intended to be a minister, added its approbation, through Dr. Smalridge, Dean of Carlisle, who was present at the performance in Oxford. "I heartily wish all discourses from the pulpit were as instructive and edifying, as pathetic and affecting, as that which the audience was then entertained with from the stage." This is a reproach to church-preachers at the cost of a compliment to Booth; and old Compton, ex-dragoon, and now dying Bishop of London, would not have relished it. Some of the metropolitan pulpits were, no doubt, less "entertaining" than the stage, but many of them were held to good purpose; and, as for the Nonconformist chapels, of which Smalridge

knew nothing—there enthusiastic Pomfret and Matthew Clarke were drawing as great crowds as Booth; Bradbury, that cheerful-minded patriarch of the Dissenters, was even more entertaining; while Neale was pathetic and earnest in Aldersgate Street; and John Gale, affecting and zealous, amid his eager hearers in Barbican. There is no greater mistake than in supposing that at this time the whole London world was engaged in resorting exclusively to the theatres, and especially to behold Booth in Cato.

The grandeur of this piece has become somewhat dulled, but it contains more true sayings constantly quoted than any other English work, save Gray's Elegy. It has been translated into French, Italian, Latin, and Russian, and has been played in Italy and in the Jesuits' College at St. Omer. Pope adorned it with a prologue; Dr. Garth trimmed it with an epilogue; dozens of poets wrote testimonial verses; tippling Eusden gave it his solemn sanction, while Dennis, with some "horseplay raillery," but with irrefutable argument, inexorably proved that, despite beauties of diction, it is one of the most absurd, inconsistent, and unnatural plays ever conceived by poet. But, Johnson remarks truly, "as we love better to be pleased than to be taught, Cato is read, and the critic is neglected."

Booth reaped no brighter triumph than in this character, in which he has had worthy, but never equally able successors. Boheme was respectable in it; Quin imposing, and generally successful; Sheridan, conventional, but grandly eloquent; Mossop,



heavy; Walker, a failure; Digges, stagy; Kemble, next to the original; Pope, "mouthy;" Cooke, altogether out of his line; Wright, weak; Young, traditional but effective; and Vandenhoff, classically correct and statuesque. In Cato, the name of Booth stands supreme; in *that*, the kinsman of the Earls of Warrington was never equalled. It was his good fortune, too, not to be admired less because of the affection for Betterton in the hearts of surviving admirers. This is manifest from the lines of Pope:—

> "On Avon's bank where flow'rs eternal blow,
> If I but ask,—if any weed can grow?—
> One tragic sentence if I dare deride,
> Which Betterton's grave action dignified,
> Or well-mouth'd Booth with emphasis proclaims
> (Though but perhaps a muster-roll of names),
> How will our fathers rise up in a rage,
> And swear all shame is lost in George's age."

The performance of Cato raised Booth to fortune as well as to fame; and through Bolingbroke he was appointed to a share in the profits of the management of Drury Lane, with Cibber, Wilks, and Dogget. The last-named, thereupon, retired in disgust, with compensation; and Cibber hints that Booth owed his promotion as much to his Tory sentiments as to his merits in acting Cato. The new partner had to pay £600 for his share of the stock property," which was to be paid by such sums as should arise from half his profits of acting, till the whole was discharged." This incumbrance upon his share he discharged out of the income he received in the first year of his joint management.

His fame, however, by this time had culminated. He sustained it well, but he cannot be said to have increased it. No other such a creation as Cato fell to his lot. Young and Thomson could not serve him as Addison and opportunity had done, and if he can be said to have won additional laurels after Cato, it was in the season of 1722–23, when he played Young Bevil, in Steele's "Conscious Lovers," with a success which belied the assertion that he was inefficient in genteel comedy. The season of 1725–26 was also one of his most brilliant.

Meanwhile, a success off the stage secured him as much happiness as, on it, he had acquired wealth and reputation. The home he had kept with Susan Mountfort was broken up. In the course of this "intimate alliance of strict friendship," as the moral euphuists called it, Booth had acted with remarkable generosity towards the lady. In the year 1714 they bought several tickets in the State Lottery, and agreed to share equally whatever fortune might ensue. Booth gained nothing; the lady won a prize of £5000, and kept it. His friends counselled him to claim half the sum, but he laughingly remarked that there had never been any but a verbal agreement on the matter; and since the result had been fortunate for his friend, she should enjoy it all.

A truer friend he found in Miss Santlow, the "Santlow famed for dance," of Gay. From the *ballet* she had passed to the dignity of an actress, and Booth had been enamoured of her "poetry of motion" before he had played Worthy to her Dorcas

Zeal. He described her, with all due ardour, in an *Ode on Mira, dancing*,—as resembling Venus in shape, air, mien, and eyes, and striking a whole theatre with love, when alone she filled the spacious scene. Thus was Miss Santlow in the popular Cato's eyes :—

> "Whether her easy body bend,
> Or her fair bosom heave with sighs,
> Whether her graceful arms extend,
> Or gently fall, or slowly rise,
> Or returning, or advancing ;
> Swimming round, or side-long glancing ;
> Gods, how divine an air
> Harmonious gesture gives the fair."

Her grace of motion effected more than eloquence, at least so Booth thought, who thus sang the nymph in her more accelerated steps to conquest :—

> "But now the flying fingers strike the lyre,
> The sprightly notes the nymph inspire.
> She whirls around ! she bounds ! she springs !
> As if Jove's messenger had lent her wings.
> Such Daphne was . . . .
> Such were her lovely limbs, so flushed her charming face !
> So round her neck ! her eyes so fair !
> So rose her swelling chest ! so flow'd her amber hair !
> While her swift feet outstript the wind,
> And left the enamour'd God of Day behind."

Now, this goddess became to Booth one of the truest, most charming, and most unselfish of mortal wives.[1] But see of what perilous stuff *she* was made who enraptured the generally unruffled poet Thomson almost as much as she did Barton Booth. For

[1] Bellchambers, in his Notes to "Cibber," is very severe on this marriage. "In the year 1719, Mr. Booth, who seems to have been a libertine and a sensualist, gave his hand to Miss Santlow, a strumpet of condition"—and then follow some very strong remarks on Booth and his wife.

her smiles, Marlborough had given what he least cared to part with—gold. Craggs, the Secretary of State, albeit a barber's son, had made her spouse, in all but name, and their daughter was mother of the first Lord St. Germans, and, by a second marriage, of the first Marquis of Abercorn. The Santlow blood thus danced itself into very excellent company; but the aristocracy gave good blood to the stage, as well as took gay blood from it. Contemporary with Booth and Mrs. Santlow were the sisters, frolic Mrs. Bicknell and Mrs. Younger. They were nearly related to Keith, Earl Marshal of Scotland. Their father had served in Flanders under King William, "perhaps," says Mr. Carruthers, in his *Life of Pope*, "rode by the side of Steele, whence Steele's interest in Mrs. Bicknell, whom he praises in the *Tatler* and *Spectator*." Mrs. Younger, in middle age, married John, brother of the seventh Earl of Winchelsea.

When Miss Santlow left the ballet for comedy, it was accounted one of the lucky incidents in the fortune of Drury. Dorcas Zeal, in the "Fair Quaker of Deal," was the first original part in which Miss Santlow appeared. Cibber says, somewhat equivocally, "that she was then in the full bloom of what beauty she might pretend to," and he, not very logically, adds, that her reception as an actress was, perhaps, owing to the admiration she had excited as a dancer. The part was suited to her figure and capacity. "The gentle softness of her voice, the composed innocence of her aspect, the modesty of her dress, the reserved decency of her gesture, and the simplicity of

the sentiments that naturally fell from her, made her seem the amiable maid she represented."

Many admirers, however, regretted that she had abandoned the ballet for the drama. They mourned as if Terpsichore herself had been on earth to charm mankind, and had gone never to return. They remembered, longed for, and now longed in vain for, that sight which used to set a whole audience half distraught with delight, when in the very ecstasy of her dance, Santlow contrived to loosen her clustering auburn hair, and letting it fall about such a neck and shoulders as Praxiteles could more readily imagine than imitate, danced on, the locks flying in the air, and half a dozen hearts at the end of every one of them.

The union of Booth and Miss Santlow was as productive of happiness as that of Betterton and Miss Saunderson. Indeed, with some few exceptions, the marriages of English players have been generally so. As much, perhaps, can hardly be said of the alliances of French actors. Molière had but a miserable time of it with Mademoiselle Béjart; but he revenged himself by producing domestic incidents of a stormy and aggravating nature, on the stage. The *status* of the French players was even lower, in one respect, than that of their English brethren. The French ecclesiastical law did not allow of marrying or giving in marriage amongst actors. They were excommunicated, by the mere fact that they were stage-players. The Church refused them the Sacrament of Marriage, and a loving couple who desired to be honestly wed, were

driven into lying. It was their habit to retire from their profession, get married as individuals who had no vocation, and the honeymoon over, to return again to the stage and their impatient public. The Church was aware of the subterfuge, and did its utmost to establish the concubinage of parties thus united; but civil law and royal influence invariably declared that these marriages were valid, seeing that the contracting parties were not excommunicated actors when the ceremony was performed, whatever they may have been a month before, or a month after.

No such difficulties as these had to be encountered by Booth and Miss Santlow; and the former lost no opportunity to render justice to the excellence of his wife. This actor's leisure was a learned leisure. Once, in his poetic vein, when turning an ode of his favourite *Horace* into English, he went into an original digression on the becomingness of a married life, and the peculiar felicity it had brought to himself. Thus sang the Benedict when the union was a few brief years old :—

"Happy the hour when first our souls were joined!
The social virtues and the cheerful mind
Have ever crowned our days, beguiled our pain;
Strangers to discord and her clamorous train.
Connubial friendship, hail! but haste away,
The lark and nightingale reproach thy stay;
From splendid theatres to rural scenes,
Joyous retire! so bounteous Heav'n ordains.
There we may dwell in peace.
There bless the rising morn, and flow'ry field,
Charm'd with the guiltless sports the woods and waters yield."

But neither the married nor the professional life of

Booth was destined to be of long continuance. His health began to give way before he was forty. The managers hoped they had found a fair substitute for him in the actor Elrington. Tom Elrington subsequently became so great a favourite with the Dublin audience that they remembered his Bajazet as preferable to that of Barry or Mossop, on the ground that in that character his voice could be heard beyond the Blind Quay, whereas that of the other-named actors was not audible outside the house! Elrington had none of the scholar-like training of Booth. He was originally apprentice to an upholsterer in Covent Garden, was wont to attend plays unknown to his master, and to act in them privately, and with equal lack of sanction. His master was a vivacious Frenchman, who, one day, came upon him as, under the instruction of Chetwood, he was studying a part in some stilted and ranting tragedy. The stage-struck apprentice, in his agitation, sewed his book up inside the cushion, on which he was at work, "while he and Chetwood exchanged many a desponding look, and every stitch went to both their hearts." The offenders escaped detection; but on another occasion the Frenchman came upon his apprentice as he was enacting the Ghost in "Hamlet," when he laid the spirit, with irresistible effect of his good right arm. Elrington was, from the beginning, a sort of "copper Booth." His first appearance on the stage, at Drury Lane, in 1709, was in Oroonoko, the character in which Booth had made his *coup d'essai* in Dublin. He was ambitious,

too, and had influential support. When Cibber refused to allow him to play Torrismond, while Elrington was yet young, a noble friend of the actor asked the manager to assign cause for the refusal. Colley was not at a loss. "It is not with us as with you, my Lord," said he; "your Lordship is sensible that there is no difficulty in filling places at court, you cannot be at a loss for persons to act their part there; but I assure you, it is quite otherwise in our theatrical world. If we should invest people with characters they should be unable to support, we should be undone."

Elrington, after a few years of success in Dublin, boldly attempted to take rank in London with Booth himself. He began the attempt in his favourite part of Bajazet, Booth playing Tamerlane. The latter, we are told by Victor, "being in full force, and perhaps animated by a spirit of emulation towards the new Bajazet, exerted all his powers; and Elrington owned to his friends that, never having felt the force of such an actor, he was not aware that it was in the power of mortal to soar so much above him and shrink him into nothing." Booth was quite satisfied with his own success, for he complimented Elrington on his, adding that his Bajazet was ten times as good as that of Mills, who had pretensions to play the character. The compliment was not ill-deserved, for Elrington possessed many of the natural and some of the acquired qualifications of Booth, whom perhaps he equalled in Oroonoko. He undoubtedly excelled Mills in Zanga, of which the latter was the original

representative. After Dr. Young had seen Elrington play it, he went round, shook him cordially by the hand, thanked him heartily, and declared he had never seen the part done such justice to as by him; "acknowledging, with some regret," says Dr. Lewis, "that Mills did but growl and mouth the character." Such was the actor who became for a time Booth's "double," and might have become his rival. During the illness of the latter, in 1728–29, Elrington, we are told, was the principal support of tragedy in Drury Lane. At that time, says Davies, "the managers were so well convinced of his importance to them, that they offered him his own conditions, if he would engage with them for a term of years." Elrington replied, "I am truly sensible of the value of your offer, but in Ireland I am so well rewarded for my services that I cannot think of leaving it on any consideration. There is not a gentleman's house to which I am not a welcome visitor."

Booth has been called indolent, but he was never so when in health, and before a fitting audience. On one thin night, indeed, he was enacting Othello rather languidly, but he suddenly began to exert himself to the utmost, in the great scene of the third act. On coming off the stage, he was asked the cause of this sudden effort. "I saw an Oxford man in the pit," he answered, "for whose judgment I had more respect than for that of the rest of the audience;" and he played the Moor to that one but efficient judge. Some causes of languor may, perhaps, be traced to the too warm patronage he received,

or rather friendship, at the hands of the nobility. It was no uncommon thing for "a carriage and six" to be in waiting for him—the equipage of some court friend—which conveyed him, in what was then considered the brief period of three hours to Windsor, and back again the next day in time for play or rehearsal. This agitated sort of life seriously affected his health; and on one occasion his recovery was despaired of. But the public favourite was restored to the town; and learned Mattaire celebrated the event in a Latin ode, in which he did honour to the memory of Betterton, and the living and invigorated genius of Booth. That genius was not so perfect as that of his great predecessor. When able to go to the theatre, though not yet able to perform, he saw Wilks play two of his parts,—Jaffier and Hastings,—and heard the applause which was awarded to his efforts; and the sound was ungrateful to the ears of the philosophical and unimpassioned Cato. But Jaffier was one of his triumphs; and he whose tenderness, pity, and terror had touched the hearts of a whole audience, was painfully affected at the triumph of another, though achieved by different means.

One of the secrets of his own success, lay, undoubtedly, in his education, feeling, and judgment. It may be readily seen from Aaron Hill's rather elaborate criticism, that he was an actor who made "points;" "he could soften and slide over, with an elegant negligence, the improprieties of a part he acted; while, on the contrary, he could dwell with

energy upon the beauties, as if he exerted a latent spirit, which he kept back for such an occasion, that he might alarm, awaken, and transport, in those places only which were worthy of his best exertions." This was really to depend on "points;" and was, perhaps, a defect in a player of whom it has been said, that he had learning to understand perfectly what it was his part to speak, and judgment to know how it agreed or disagreed with his character." The following, by Hill, is as graphic as anything in Cibber:— "Booth had a talent at discovering the passions, where they lay hid in some celebrated parts, by the injudicious practice of other actors; when he had discovered, he soon grew able to express them; and his secret of attaining this great lesson of the theatre, was an adaptation of his look to his voice, by which artful imitation of nature, the variations in the sounds of his words gave propriety to every change in his countenance. So that it was Mr. Booth's peculiar felicity to be heard and seen the same; whether as the pleased, the grieved, the pitying, the reproachful, or the angry. One would be almost tempted to borrow the aid of a very bold figure, and to express this excellency the more significantly, by permission to affirm, that *the Blind might have seen him in his voice, and the Deaf have heard him in his visage.*"

In his later years, says a critic, "his merit as an actor was unrivalled, and even so extraordinary, as to be almost beyond the reach of envy." His Othello, Cato, and his Polydore, in the "Orphan," in which he was never equalled, were long the theme of admira-

tion to his survivors, as were in a less degree his sorrowing and not roaring Lear, his manly yet not blustering Hotspur. Dickey Brass and Dorimant, Wildair and Sir Charles Easy,[1] Pinchwife, Manley, and Young Bevil, were among the best of his essays in comedy,—where, however, he was surpassed by Wilks. "But then, I believe," says a critic, "no one will say he did not appear the fine gentleman in the character of Bevil, in the 'Conscious Lovers.' It is said that he *once* played Falstaff in the presence of Queen Anne, 'to the delight of the whole audience.'"

Aaron Hill, curiously statistical, states, that by the peculiar delivery of certain sentiments in Cato, Booth was always sure of obtaining from eighteen to twenty rounds of applause during the evening,—marks of approval, both of matter and manner. Like Betterton, he abounded in feeling. There was nothing of the stolidity of "Punch" in either of them. Betterton is said to have sometimes turned as "white as his neckcloth," on seeing his father's ghost; while Booth, when playing the ghost to Betterton's Hamlet, was once so horror-stricken at his distraught aspect, as to be too disconcerted to proceed, for a while, in his part. Either actor, however, knew how far to safely yield themselves to feeling. Judgment was always within call; the head ready to control the heart, however wildly it might be impelled by the latter. Baron, the

[1] These four characters were certainly not among Booth's best. Wildair and Sir Charles Easy were Wilks' parts, and indeed I cannot find that Booth ever played any of the four.

French actor, did not know better than they, that while rules may teach the actor not to raise his arms above his head, he will do well to break the rule, if passion carry him that way. "Passion," as Baron remarked, "knows more than art."

I have noticed the report that Booth and Wilks were jealous of each other; I think there was more of emulation than of envy between them. Booth could make sacrifices in favour of young actors as unreservedly as Betterton. I find, even when he was in possession, as it was called, of all the leading parts, that he as often played Laertes, or even Horatio, as the Ghost or Hamlet. His Laertes was wonderfully fine, and in a great actor's hands, may be made, in the fifth act, at least, equal with the princely Dane himself. Again, although his Othello was one of his grandest impersonations, he would take Cassio, in order to give an aspirant a chance of triumph in the Moor. In "Macbeth," Booth played, one night, the hero of the piece; on another, Banquo; and on a third, the little part of Lennox. He was quite content that Cibber should play Wolsey, while he captivated the audience by enacting the King. His Henry was a mixture of frank humour, dignity, and sternness. Theophilus Cibber says enough to convince us that Booth, in the King, could be familiar without being vulgar, and that his anger was of the quality that excites terror. He pronounced the four words, "Go thy ways, Kate," with such a happy emphasis as to win admiration and applause: and "when he said, 'Now, to breakfast with what appetite you may,' his

expression was rapid and vehement, and his look tremendous."

The credit attached to the acting of inferior parts by leading players was shared with Booth by Wilks and Cibber. Of the latter, his son says, that "though justly esteemed the first comedian of his time, and superior to all we have since beheld, he has played several parts, to keep up the spirit of some comedies, which you will now scarcely find one player in twenty who will not reject as beneath his Mock-Excellence."

Booth *could*, after all, perhaps, occasionally be languid without the excuse of illness. He would play his best to a single man in the pit whom he recognised as a playgoer, and a judge of acting; but to an unappreciating audience he could exhibit an almost contemptuous disinclination to exert himself. On one occasion of this sort he was made painfully sensible of his mistake, and a note was addressed to him from the stage-box, the purport of which was to know whether he was acting for his own diversion or in the service and for the entertainment of the public?

On another occasion, with a thin house, and a cold audience, he was languidly going through one of his usually grandest impersonations, namely, Pyrrhus. At his very dullest scene he started into the utmost brilliancy and effectiveness. His eye had just previously detected in the pit a gentleman, named Stanyan, the friend of Addison and Steele, and the correspondent of the Earl of Manchester. Stanyan was an accomplished man and a judicious critic.

Booth played to him with the utmost care and corresponding success. "No, no!" he exclaimed, as he passed behind the scenes, radiant with the effect he had produced, "I will not have it said at Button's, that Barton Booth is losing his powers!"

Some indolence was excusable, however, in actors who ordinarily laboured as Booth did. As an instance of the toil which they had to endure for the sake of applause, I will notice that in the season of 1712–13, when Booth studied, played, and triumphed in Cato, he within not many weeks studied and performed five original and very varied characters, Cato being the last of a roll, which included Arviragus, in the "Successful Pirate;" Captain Stanworth, in the "Female Advocates;" Captain Wildish, in "Humours of the Army;" Cinna, in an adaptation of Corneille's play, and finally, Cato.

No doubt Booth was finest when put upon his mettle. In May 1726, for instance, Giffard from Dublin appeared at Drury Lane, as the Prince of Wales, in "Henry IV." The debutant was known to be an admirer of the Hotspur of roaring Elrington. The Percy was one of Booth's most perfect exhibitions; and, ill as he was on the night he was to play it to Giffard's Harry, he protested that he would surprise the new comer, and the house too; and he played with such grace, fire, and energy, that the audience were beside themselves with ecstasy, and the new actor was profuse at the side-scenes, and

even out of hearing of Booth, in acknowledgment of the great master and his superiority over every living competitor.

Betterton cared little if his audience was select, provided it also was judicious; Booth, however, loved a full house, though he could play his best to a solitary, but competent, individual in the pit. He confessed that he considered profit after fame, and thought that large audiences tended to the increase of both. The intercourse between audience and actor was, in his time, more intimate and familiar than it is now. Thus we see Booth entering a coffee-house in Bow Street, one morning after he had played Varanes, on the preceding night. The gentlemen present, all playgoers, as naturally as they were coffee-house frequenters, cluster round him, and acknowledge the pleasure they had enjoyed in witnessing him act. These pleasant morning critics only venture to blame him for allowing such unmeaning stuff as the pantomime of "Perseus and Andromeda" to follow the classical tragedy and mar its impression. But the ballet-pantomime draws great houses, and is therefore a less indignity in Booth's eye, than half empty benches. It was not the business of managers, he said, to be wise to empty boxes. "There were many more spectators," he said, "than men of taste and judgment; and if by the artifice of a pantomime they could entice a greater number to partake of a good play than could be drawn without it, he could not see any great harm in it; and that, as those pieces were performed

after the play, they were no interruption to it." In short, he held pantomimes to be rank nonsense, which might be rendered useful, after the fashion of his explanation.

His retirement from the stage may be laid to the importunity of Mr. Theobald, who urged him to act in a play, for a moment attributed to Shakspeare, the "Double Falsehood." Booth struggled through the part of Julio, for a week, in the season of 1727–28, and then withdrew, utterly cast down, and in his forty-sixth year. Broxham, Friend, Colebatch, and Mead came with their canes, perukes, pills, and proposals, and failing to restore him, they sent him away from London. The sick player and his wife wandered from town to Bath, from the unavailing springs there to Ostend, thence to Antwerp, and on to Holland, to consult Boerhaave, who could only tell the invalid that in England a man should never leave off his winter clothing till midsummer-day, and that he should resume it the day after. From Holland the sad couple came home to Hampstead, and ultimately back to London, where fever, jaundice, and other maladies attacked Booth with intermitting severity. Here, in May 1733, a quack doctor persuaded him that if he would take "crude mercury" it would not only prevent the return of his fever but effectually cure him of all his complaints. As we are gravely informed that, within five days the poor victim "took within two ounces of two pounds weight of mercury," we are not surprised to hear that at the end of that time Booth was *in extremis*,

and that Sir Hans Sloane was at his bedside to accelerate, as it would seem, the catastrophe.

To peruse what followed is like reading the details of an assassination. As if the two pounds, minus two ounces, of mercury were not enough, poor Booth was bled profusely at the jugular, his feet were plastered, and his scalp was blistered; he was assailed in various ways by cathartics, and mocked, I may so call it, by emulsions; the *Daily Post* announced that he lay a-dying at his house in Hart Street, other notices pronounced him moribund in Charles Street; but he was alive on the morning of the 10th of May 1733, when a triad of prescriptions being applied against him, Cato at length happily succumbed. But the surgeons would not let the dead actor rest; they opened his body, and dived into its recesses, and called things by strong names, and avoided technicalities; and, after declaring everything to be very much worse than the state of Denmark, as briefly described by *Hamlet*, Alexander Small, the especial examiner, signing the report, added a postscript thereto, implying that "There was no fault in any part of his body, but what is here mentioned." Poor fellow! We are told that he recovered from his fever, but that he died of the jaundice, helped, I think, by the treatment.

A few days subsequently the body was privately interred in Cowley Church, near Uxbridge, where he occasionally resided. A few old friends, and some dearer than friends, accompanied him to the grave. His will was as a kiss on either cheek of his beautiful

widow, and a slap on both cheeks of sundry of his relations. To the former he left everything he had possessed, and for the very best of reasons. "As I have been," he says, "a man much known and talked of, my not leaving legacies to my relations may give occasion to censorious people to reflect upon my conduct in this latter act of my life; therefore, I think it necessary to declare that I have considered my circumstances, and finding, upon a strict examination, that all I am now possessed of does not amount to two-thirds of the fortune my wife brought me on the day of our marriage, together with the yearly additions and advantages since arising from her laborious employment on the stage during twelve years past, I thought myself bound by honesty, honour, and gratitude, due to her constant affection, not to give away any part of the remainder of her fortune at my death, having already bestowed, in free gifts, upon my sister, Barbara Rogers, upwards of thirteen hundred pounds, *out of my wife's substance*, and full four hundred pounds of her money on my undeserving brother, George Booth (besides the gifts they received before my marriage), and all those benefits were conferred on my said brother and sister, from time to time, at the earnest solicitation of my wife, who was perpetually entreating me to continue the allowance I gave my relations before my marriage. The inhuman return that has been made my wife for these obligations, by my sister, I forbear to mention." This was justice without vengeance, and worthy of the sage, of whom Booth was the most finished representative. The

generosity of Hester Santlow, too, has been fittingly preserved in the will; the whole of which, moreover, is a social illustration of the times.

In Westminster, "Barton Street" keeps up the actor's name; and "Cowley Street" the remembrance of his proprietorship of a country estate near Uxbridge. To pass through the former street is like being transported to the times of Queen Anne. It is a quaint old locality, very little changed since the period in which Barton built it. No great stretch of imagination is required to fancy the original Pyrrhus and Cato gliding along the shady side, with a smile on his lips and a certain fire in his eye. He is thinking of Miss Santlow!

With Booth slowly dying, and Mrs. Oldfield often too ill to act, the prospects of Drury began to wane in 1728–29. Elrington could not supply the place of the former; nor Mrs. Porter and Mrs. Horton combined, that of the latter. Cibber carefully instructed his son Theophilus in the part of Pistol, which became his one great part, and the appearance of Miss Raftor as Dorinda, in Dryden's version of the "Tempest," on the 2nd of January 1729, marks the first step in the bright and unchequered career of one who is better remembered as Kitty Clive, of whom, more hereafter.[1] She was not able to save Cibber's pastoral comedy,

[1] Chetwood states that her first character was Ismenes, a page, in "Mithridates," in which she sang with extraordinary success. Genest supposes this to have been in November 1728.

"Love in a Riddle," from condemnation by an audience who had the ill-manners, as it was considered, to hiss, despite a royal presence in the house. As the new names rose the old ones fell off, and Congreve and Steele—the first rich and a gentleman, the second needy, but a gentleman, too—died in 1720, leaving no one but Cibber fit to compete with them in comedy. Musical pieces, such as the "Village Opera" and the "Lover's Opera," born of Gay's success, brought no such golden results to their authors or the house, which was still happy in retaining Wilks.

On the other hand, in the Fields, where ballad-opera had been a mine of wealth to astonished managers, classical tragedy took the lead, with Quin leading in everything, and growing in favour with a town whose applause could no longer be claimed by Booth. But classical tragedy reaped no golden harvests. Barford's "Virgin Queen" lives but in a line of Pope to Arbuthnot. The "Themistocles" (Quin) of young Madden, whom Ireland ought to remember as one of her benefactors who was no mere politician, lived but for a few nights.[1] Mrs. Heywood succeeded as ill with her romantic tragedy, "Frederick, Duke of Brunswick," which was five acts of flattery to the House of Hanover, some of whose members yawned over it ungratefully. But the "Beggar's Opera" could always fill the house whether Miss Cantrell warbled Polly, with the old cast, or children played all the parts—a foolish novelty, not unattractive. Hawker, an actor, vainly tried to rival Gay,

[1] Acted nine times.

with a serio-comic opera, the "Wedding," and Gay himself was doomed to suffer disappointment; for the authorities suppressed his "Polly," a vapid continuation of the fortunes of Macheath and the lady, and thereby drove almost to the disaffection of which he was accused, not only Gay, but his patrons, the Duke and Duchess of Queensberry, who punished the Court by absenting themselves from its pleasures and duties. The poet, who desired nothing but the joys of a quiet life, a good table, and a suit of blue and silver, all which he enjoyed beneath the ducal roof, happiest of mercer's apprentices, found compensation in publishing his work by subscription, whereby he realised so large a sum as to satisfy his utmost wishes.

Drury Lane was not fortunate in any of its new pieces in the season of 1729–30. It was, perhaps, unfortunate that Mrs. Oldfield, by her recommendation, and by her acting, obtained even partial success for a comedy, by the Rev. James Miller, the "Humours of Oxford." This satirical piece brought the author into trouble with his University, at some of whose members it was aimed, and it did not tend to raise him in the estimation of his congregation in Conduit Street.

The tragedy of "Timoleon" was ruined[1] by the zeal of the author's friends, who crowded the house, and as loudly applauded the candle-snuffers and furniture as they did Mills or Mrs. Porter. Martyn, the author, had been a linen-draper, but his epitaph in Lewisham Churchyard describes him as "one of the

[1] It was acted fourteen times—a great success in those days.

best bred men in England." He was certainly well connected, but he exhibited more efficiency in colonising Georgia than in writing poetry. His "Timoleon" had neither beauty of style, nor incident.

This season, too, saw the first dramatic attempt of Thomson, in "Sophonisba." Lee's tragedy of that name used to drown the female part of the house in tears; but Thomson's could not stir even his own friends to enthusiasm. They rose from the full-dress rehearsals to which they were invited, dulled in sense rather than touched or elevated. Thomson's play is far less tender than Lee's; his Sophonisba (the last character originally played by Mrs. Oldfield), more stern and patriotic, and less loving. The author himself described her as a "female Cato," and in the Epilogue not too delicately indicated that if the audience would only applaud a native poet,

> "Then other Shakspeares yet may rouse the stage,
> And other Otways melt another age."

"Sophonisba," which Thomson was not afraid to set above the heroine of Corneille, abounds in platitudes, and it was fatal to Cibber, who, never tolerable in tragedy, was fairly hissed out of the character of Scipio, which he surrendered to a promising player, Williams. The latter was violently hissed also on the first night of his acting Scipio, he bore so close a resemblance to his predecessor. Mrs. Oldfield, alone, made a sensation, especially in the delivery of the line,

> "Not one base word of Carthage—on thy soul!"

Her grandeur of action, her stern expression, and her powerful tone of voice, elicited the most enthusiastic applause. Exactly two months later, on the 28th of April 1730, she acted Lady Brute, aud therewith suddenly terminated her thirty years of service, dying exactly six months after illness compelled her to withdraw.

Before noticing more fully the career of Mrs. Oldfield, let me record here, that on the night she played Lady Brute in the "Provoked Wife," the part of Mademoiselle was acted by Charlotte Charke, the wife of a good singer, but a worthless man, and the youngest child of Colley Cibber.[1] There seems to have been a touch of insanity, certainly there was no power of self-control in this poor woman. From her childhood she had been wild, wayward, and rebellious; self-taught as a boy might be, and with nothing feminine in her character or pursuits. With self-assertion, too, she was weak enough to be won by a knave with a sweet voice, whose cruel treatment drove his intractable wife to the stage, where she failed to profit by her fine opportunities.

The corresponding season at Lincoln's Inn Fields was the usual one of an unfashionable house; but Quin, Ryan, Walker, and Boheme were actors who made way against Wilks, Cibber, Mills, and Bridgewater. No new piece of any value was produced; the only incidents worth recording being the playing of Macheath by Quin, for his benefit: and the sudden

[1] Charlotte Charke says in her *Autobiography* that this was her first appearance, but it was really her second.

death of Spiller, stricken by apoplexy, as he was playing in the "Rape of Proserpine." He was inimitable in old men, though he himself was young; but whatever he played, he so identified himself with his character that Spiller disappeared from the eyes and the thoughts of an audience, unconsciously deluded by the artist.

As the town grew, so also did theatres increase; that in Goodman's Fields, and the little house in the Haymarket, were open this season. At the former Giffard and his wife led in tragedy and comedy; but the company was generally weak. Not so the authors who wrote for the house. First among them was Fielding, a young fellow of three and twenty; bred to the law, but driven to the drama by the inability of his father, the General, to supply him with funds. His first play, "Love in Several Masques," was acted at Drury Lane in 1728; his second, and a better, the "Temple Beau," was played at Goodman's Fields.

Ralph, who had been a schoolmaster in Philadelphia, and came to England to thrive by political, satirical, or dramatic writings, and to live for ever in the abuse lavished on him by Pope, supplied a ballad-opera, the "Fashionable Lady," which was *intended* to rival the "Beggar's Opera." To Macheath-Walker is ascribed a tragedy, the "Fate of Villany;" and Mottley, the disappointed candidate for place, and the compiler of *Joe Miller's Jests*—Miller being a better joker than he was an actor—wrote for this house his "Widow Bewitched," the last and poorest of his contributions to the stage.

For the Haymarket, Fielding wrote the only piece which has come down to our times, his immortal burlesque-tragedy of "Tom Thumb," in which the weakness and bombast of late or contemporary writers are copied with wonderful effect. Young suffered severely by this;—and the "Oh, Huncamunca! Huncamunca, oh!" was a dart at the "Oh, Sophonisba! Sophonisba, oh!" of Jamie Thomson. Of the other pieces I need not disturb the dust. Let me rather, contemplating that of Mrs. Oldfield, glance at the career of that great actress, who living knew no rival, and in her peculiar line has never been excelled.

Mr. Garrick as Abel Drugger.

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